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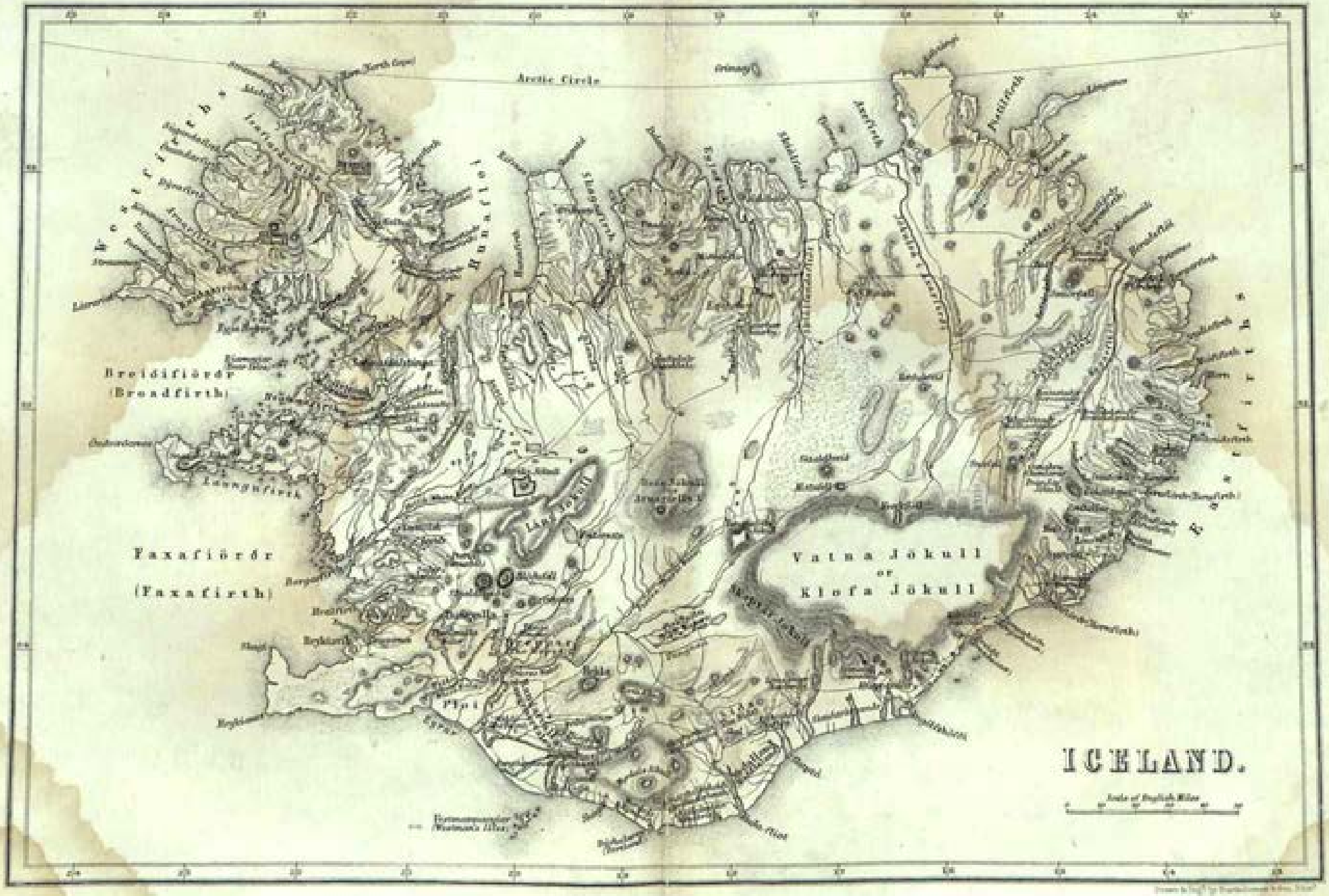

EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS, EDINBURGH.

THE STORY

OF

BURNT NJAL

OR

LIFE IN ICELAND AT THE END OF THE TENTH CENTURY.

From the Icelandic of the Njals Saga.

BY

GEORGE WEBBE DASENT,
D.C.L.

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION, MAPS, AND PLANS.

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PREFACE.

WHAT is a Saga? A Saga is a story, or telling in prose, sometimes mixed with verse. There are many kinds of Sagas, of all degrees of truth. There are the *mythical* Sagas, in which the wondrous deeds of heroes of old time, half gods and half men, as Sigurd and Ragnar, are told as they were handed down from father to son in the traditions of the Northern race. Then there are Sagas recounting the history of the kings of Norway and other countries, of the great line of Orkney Jarls, and of the chiefs who ruled in Faroe. These are all more or less trustworthy, and, in general, far worthier of belief than much that passes for the early history of other races. Again, there are Sagas relating to Iceland, narrating the lives, and feuds, and ends of mighty chiefs, the heads of the great families which dwelt in this or that district of the island. These were told by men who lived on the very spot, and told with a minuteness and exactness, as to time and place, that will bear the strictest examination. Such a

Saga is that of Njal, which we now lay before our readers in an English garb. Of all the Sagas relating to Iceland, this tragic story bears away the palm for truthfulness and beauty. To use the words of one well qualified to judge, it is, as compared with all similar compositions, as gold to brass.* Like all the Sagas which relate to the same period of Icelandic story, Njala† was not written down till about 100 years after the events which are described in it had happened. In the meantime, it was handed down by word of mouth, told from Althing to Althing, at Spring Thing, and Autumn Leet, at all great gatherings of the people, and over many a fireside, on sea strand or river bank, or up among the dales and hills, by men who had learnt the sad story of Njal's fate, and who could tell of Gunnar's peerlessness and Hallgerda's infamy, of Bergthora's helpfulness, of Skarphedinn's hastiness, of Flosi's foul deed, and Kari's stern revenge. We may be sure that as soon as each event recorded in the Saga occurred, it was told and talked about as matter of history, and when at last the whole story was unfolded and took shape, and centred round

* Guðbrandr Vigfússon.

† This word is invented like Laxdæla, Gretla, and others, to escape the repetition of the word Saga, after that of the person or place to which the story belongs. It combines the idea of the subject and the telling in one word.

Njal, that it was handed down from father to son, as truthfully and faithfully as could ever be the case with any public or notorious matter in local history. But it is not on Njala alone that we have to rely for our evidence of its genuineness. There are many other Sagas relating to the same period, and handed down in like manner, in which the actors in our Saga are incidentally mentioned by name, and in which the deeds recorded of them are corroborated. They are mentioned also in songs and Annals, the latter being the earliest written records which belong to the history of the island, while the former were more easily remembered, from the construction of the verse. Much passes for history in other lands on far slighter grounds, and many a story in Thucydides or Tacitus, or even in Clarendon or Hume, is believed on evidence not one-tenth part so trustworthy as that which supports the narratives of these Icelandic story-tellers of the eleventh century. That with occurrences of undoubted truth, and minute particularity as to time and place, as to dates and distance, are intermingled wild superstitions on several occasions, will startle no reader of the smallest judgment. All ages, our own not excepted, have their superstitions, and to suppose that a story told in the eleventh century,—when phantoms, and ghosts, and

wraiths, were implicitly believed in, and when dreams, and warnings, and tokens, were part of every man's creed,—should be wanting in these marks of genuineness, is simply to require that one great proof of its truthfulness should be wanting, and that, in order to suit the spirit of our age, it should lack something which was part and parcel of popular belief in the age to which it belonged. To a thoughtful mind, therefore, such stories as that of Swan's witchcraft, Gunnar's song in his cairn, the Wolf's ride before the Burning, Flosi's dream, the signs and tokens before Brian's battle, and even Njal's weird foresight, on which the whole story hangs, will be regarded as proofs rather for than against its genuineness.*

But it is an old saying, that a story never loses in telling, and so we may expect it must have been with this story. For the facts which the Saga-teller related he was bound to follow the narrations of those who had gone before him, and if he swerved to or fro in

* Many particulars mentioned in the Saga as wonderful are no wonders to us. Thus in the case of Gunnar's bill, when we are told that it gave out a strange sound before great events, this probably only means that the shaft on which it was mounted was of some hard ringing wood unknown in the north. It was a foreign weapon, and if the shaft were of lance wood, the sounds it gave out when brandished or shaken would be accounted for at once without a miracle.

this respect, public opinion and notorious fame was there to check and contradict him.* But the way in which he told the facts was his own, and thus it comes that some Sagas are better told than others, as the feeling and power of the narrator were above those of others. To tell a story truthfully, was what was looked for from all men in those days; but to tell it properly and gracefully, and so to clothe the facts in fitting diction, was given to few, and of those few the Saga teller who first threw Njala into its present shape, was one of the first and foremost.

* There can be no doubt that it was considered a grave offence to public morality to tell a Saga untruthfully. Respect to friends and enemies alike, when they were dead and gone, demanded that the histories of their lives, and especially of their last moments, should be told as the events had actually happened. Our own Saga affords a good illustration of this, and shows at the same time how a Saga naturally arose out of great events. When King Sigtrygg was Earl Sigurd's guest at Yule, and Flosi and the other Burners were about the Earl's court, the Irish king wished to hear the story of the Burning, and Gunnar Lambi's son was put forward to tell it at the feast on Christmas day. It only added to Kari's grudge against him to hear Gunnar tell the story with such a false leaning, when he gave it out that Skarphedinn had wept for fear of the fire, and the vengeance which so speedily overtook the false teller was looked upon as just retribution. But when Flosi took up the story, he told it fairly and justly for both sides, "and therefore," says the Saga, "what he said was believed."

With the change of faith and conversion of the Icelanders to Christianity, writing, and the materials for writing, first came into the land, about the year 1000. There is no proof that the earlier or Runic alphabet, which existed in heathen times, was ever used for any other purposes than those of simple monumental inscriptions, or of short legends on weapons or sacrificial vessels, or horns and drinking cups. But with the Roman alphabet came not only a readier means of expressing thought, but also a class of men who were wont thus to express themselves. While the open nature of the Northman's life called upon him for words rather than writing, and even in trials, rather for oral than written testimony; while the heathen priest's memory was burdened with a few solemn forms of oaths taken in the temples, and some short prayers and toasts recited and uttered at sacrifices and feasts, the Christian monk, with his mass book and ritual, was thrown, by the very nature of his services, and by solitude of his cell, into fellowship with letters, and taught to express himself by writing rather than by speech. Thus, during the whole of the eleventh century, two separate systems of teaching existed in Iceland. Oral teaching, as regarded the traditions and history of the country by the mouths of the Saga-tellers; and written teaching in the services performed on

Sundays and Saints' days by the Christian ecclesiastics—the one speaking and the other reading what they wished the community to learn. Under this system we shall not be surprised to hear that the earliest fragments of MSS. which have come down to us from that century are portions of ecclesiastical legends and lives of Saints, which the clergy had composed in the Icelandic language for the edification of their flocks. About the beginning of the twelfth century, what may be termed a national love of letters arose in Iceland, and the Roman character, hitherto employed only as the vehicle for priestly instruction, was extended to a wider field. The poetical literature of the north was collected into one volume by Saemund the learned, who died in the year 1133. Then, too, it was that the attention of Ari the learned (born 1067, died 1148) was turned towards employing Roman writing with a view towards preserving by means of that alphabet the history of his forefathers. Thus it was that the first sketch and outline arose of what we now know as Landnáma, a volume that contains the account of the colonization of the island. The first step taken, others soon followed in Ari's footsteps. Saga after Saga was reduced to writing, and before the year 1200 it is reckoned that all the pieces of that kind of composition

which relate to the history of Icelanders previous to the introduction of Christianity had passed from the oral into the written shape.* Of all those Sagas, none were so interesting as Njal, whether as regarded the length of the story, the number and rank of the chiefs who appeared in it as actors, and the graphic way in which the tragic tale was told. As a rounded whole, in which each part is finely and beautifully polished, in which the two great divisions of the story are kept in perfect balance and counterpoise, in which each person who appears is left free to speak in a way which stamps him with a character of his own, while all unite in working towards a common end, no Saga had such claims on public attention as Njala, and it is certain none would sooner have been committed to writing. The latest period, therefore, that we can assign as the date at which our Saga was moulded into its present shape is the year 1200. The perfect MSS. which exist are indeed of the thirteenth century, but there are fragments still

* It is positively stated in Sturlúnga, I. 107, that all the Sagas of that date were written down before the death of Bishop Brandr, who died in the year 1201. Compare Guðbrandr Vigfússon, Safn til Sög. Isl., II. 190, where, by a misprint, the reference to Sturlúnga is wrongly given as II. 17. It should either be by vol. and page, I. 107, as above, or by part and chapter, ii. 38. As the passage is very important, it is worth while to correct the misprint.

existing of others of an earlier date. When we reflect that not only Njala was reduced to writing at that period, but very many other Sagas also, some of which have perished, though a great mass of them still remain, we shall be astonished at the industry displayed by the Icelandic scribes of the twelfth century, and we may fairly challenge any other nation of Europe in that century to show a like store of vernacular literature.*

* The following very sensible remarks are translated from the Icelandic Preface to Egils Saga Reykjavík, 1856 :—"We may say the same of this, as of all the best Sagas relating to Iceland, that their authors never wilfully tell untruths ; they write down the Saga just as it had taken shape, little by little, and just as they believe that all had happened. Where, for instance, the strength or daring of any man are plainly overdrawn, the reason of this is, not that the authors had any wish to exaggerate on those points, but rather because they had heard the story told so, and had made up their minds that so it must have been. The same may be said of the superstitions and contradictions which occur in the Sagas. They show no wilful purpose to tell untruths, but simply are proofs of the beliefs and turn of thought of men in the age when the Sagas were reduced to writing. But though the Icelandic Saga-writers followed oral tradition, they may nevertheless be rightly called authors. The choice of words and style, the whole hue of the story and handling of the subject, are their work. Had any other man, for example, put Njal's Saga into shape than he who actually undertook that task, then the Saga would have been quite another thing than it really is. It was granted to few to clothe that story in so fair a garb. The writers of the Icelandic Sagas would therefore have had every right to inscribe their names on the Sagas which they threw into

The way in which the Saga throws light on the customs and manners of the Icelanders, and in which those customs and manners in their turn illustrate the Saga, have been worked out in the Introduction and Appendix, not by any means as fully as the subject deserves, but sufficiently so to guide the reader who may wish to obtain some knowledge of a strange state of society along what he would otherwise find a darksome path. In this place it will suffice if we say something of the translation itself. It has been purposely made as literal as the idioms of the two languages would permit. In the renderings of the songs indeed a little more licence has been taken, but even these will be found by any one who is able to compare them with the original to be very faithful.* The duty of a translator is not to

shape; the only pity is that so few of them did so; and thus it is that we know, surely, neither who composed such and such a Saga, nor when it was thrown into its present shape. I only wish that Icelanders had begun, like Herodotus and Thucydides, by writing their names on the first line of their book, and so given it out that they were its authors. Then, perhaps, other peoples would not have wrongfully taken their works to themselves."

* It will be seen, that in most cases the names of places throughout the Saga have been turned into English, either in whole or in part, as "Lithend" for "Líðarendi," and "Bergthorsknoll" for "Bergthorshvól." The translator adopted this course to soften the ruggedness of the original names for the English reader, but in every case the Icelandic name, with its English

convey the sense of his original in such a way that the idioms and wording of one tongue are sacrificed to those of the other, but to find out the words and idioms of his own language which answer most fully and fairly to those of the language from which he is translating, and so to make the one as perfect a reflection as is possible of the forms and thoughts of the other. From such a point of view a translation becomes a labour of love indeed, but it is also a work of time and toil. It was in the year 1843 that the translator first made up his mind to turn Njala into English, and a considerable portion of the Saga was

rendering, will be found in the maps. The surnames and nicknames have also been turned into English, an attempt which has not a little increased the toil of translation. Great allowance must be made for these renderings, as those nicknames often arose out of circumstances of which we know little or nothing. Of some, such as "Thorgeir Craggeir," and "Thorkel foulmouth," the Saga itself explains the origin. In a state of society where so many men bore the same name, any circumstance or event in a man's life, as well as any peculiarity in form or feature, or in temper and turn of mind, gave rise to a surname or nickname, which clung to him through life as a distinguishing mark. The Post Office in the United States is said to give persons in the same district, with similar names, an initial of identification, which answers the same purpose as the Icelandic nickname, thus :—"John *P* Smith,"—"John *Q* Smith." As a general rule the translator has withstood the temptation to use old English words. "Busk" and "boun" he pleads guilty to, because both still linger in the language understood by few. "Busk" is a reflective formed from "at búa

actually translated in that year. But it was soon found that there are some things which, begun in youth, must wait for their completion till middle age; and though the work has never been wholly laid aside, it has been translated and retranslated, in some cases many times over, in the intervening space. Even now, after all that has been done to make the rendering faithful, the translator lays it with dread before the public, not because he has any doubt as to the beauty of his original, but because he is in despair, lest any shortcomings of his own should mar the noble features of the masterpiece which it has been his care to copy. Indeed, on looking back over the years that have elapsed between the conception of the design and its fulfilment, the writer is more and more astonished at his own rash-

sik" "to get oneself ready," and "boun" is the past participle of the active form "búa, búinn," to get ready. When the leader in Old Ballads says—

"Busk ye, busk ye,
My bonny, bonny, men,"

He calls on his followers to equip themselves; when they are thus equipped they are "boun." A bride "busks" herself for the bridal; when she is dressed she is "boun." In old times a ship was "busked" for a voyage; when she was fitted and ready for sea she was "boun"—whence come our outward "bound" and homeward "bound." These with "redes" for counsels or plans are almost the only words in the translation which are not still in every-day use.

ness in proposing to undertake such a task, with the means then at his command. There was a printed text indeed, but one very full of literal errors. There was no dictionary of the language, and no reliable work on the Law, which fills so large a part of the Saga. Since 1843, matters have happily changed, in some of these respects; the text still remains the same text, carelessly printed from good MSS.; and a new edition, announced as forthcoming for several years, still remains to come forth. But the dictionary of the language, the materials for which were collected with so much toil and skill for many years by the lamented Richard Cleasby, who died just as he was reducing them to shape—that dictionary which was hastily finished after his death by the generosity of his family, which was transferred by them to the translator for publication in England, and which will be published as soon as it is in a fit state to be laid before the world, has been the greatest help in the translation. In many of the darkest mysteries of the law, the critical genius of Maurer has held out a safe and certain guide, and though last, not least, the constant intercourse and communication which the translator has maintained with Icelandic scholars, of whom it may be here permitted to name his old friend Grímur Thomsen, and

his new friend Guðbrandr Vigfússon, have enabled him to throw light on many points of Icelandic topography, as well as on the life, law, and customs of the early Icelanders. Much undoubtedly still remains to be done, even by Icelanders themselves, for the early history of their country. There are many customs still to be explained, many riddles of social life solved, many knotty points of law unravelled, but so far as knowledge on any point was to be obtained the translator has sought for it, and if it were not to be found, at least done his best to find it.

In conclusion, this preface must not end without a word of acknowledgment as to the help which the translator has received from the publishers of the work, Messrs. Edmonston and Douglas, who have spared no expense or pains to lay Njal before the world in a beautiful and becoming shape. In addition to this, the index, a work of no little toil, has been entirely prepared and arranged by Mr. Douglas, and it may safely be said, whether the translation, as a translation, be good or bad, no work has seen the light of late years in this country with a better index. The maps and plans have been engraved with great care and skill by Mr. Bartholomew; the first from the excellent map of Iceland based on the trigonometrical

survey undertaken by the Danish government; the last, so far as the old Icelandic Hall is concerned, from the beautiful designs of Sigurðr Guðmundson, artist of Reykjavík, who is a living proof that the skill of hand which adorned the Hall at Hjarðarholt in the tenth century, still exists in Iceland at the present day, and whose thorough knowledge of the Sagas has enabled him to restore the dwellings of his forefathers. The plans of the Thingfield are chiefly from a sketch kindly furnished by Captain Forbes, R.N., whose book on Iceland only makes the reader wish that the author had spent more time on the island. Mr. Metcalfe, B.D., who spent some months in Iceland during the present year, has furnished some valuable topographical information. The sketch for the cover is from the hand of Mr. James Drummond, R.S.A., who has combined the chief weapons mentioned in our Saga, Gunnar's bill, Skarphedinn's axe, and Kari's sword, all bound together with one of the great silver rings found in some Viking's hoard in Orkney, into a most beautiful design. To each and all of these the translator wishes to return his best thanks for that ready help which now enables him to send Njal out into the world with a smiling face.*

* The following is the title of the original :—"Sagan af Njáli Þorgeirsyni ok sonum hans etc^ra. Útgefin efter gaumlum

It was a foster-father's duty, in old times, to rear and cherish the child which he had taken from the arms of its natural parents, his superiors in rank. And so may this work, which the translator has taken from the house of Icelandic scholars, his masters in knowledge, and which he has reared and fostered so many years under an English roof, go forth and fight the battle of life for itself, and win fresh fame for those who gave it birth. It will be reward enough for him who has first clothed it in an English dress if his foster-child adds another leaf to that evergreen wreath of glory which crowns the brows of Iceland's ancient worthies.

BROAD SANCTUARY,
Christmas Eve, 1860.

Skinnbókum, með Konunglegu leyfi, ok prentuð í Kaupmannahaufn Árið 1772 af Johann Rúdolph Thiele." "The Saga of Njál Thorgeir's son and his sons, etc^ra. edited from old MS. with Royal licence, and printed in Copenhagen in the year 1772 by John Rudolph Thiele." In the year 1809 appeared "Njál's Saga. Historia Njali et Filiorum Latine reddita, cum adjectâ chronologiâ, variis textus Islandici lectionibus, earumque crisi, nec non glossario et indice rerum et locorum. Sumtibus Petri Friderici Suhmii et Legati Arna-Magnæani. Havniæ Anno M.D.CCCIX. Literis Typographi Johannis Rudolphi Thiele." The various readings, the notes, and the versions of the songs in this Latin translation, are particularly good, but the new edition of the Icelandic text, so long promised by Konrad Gíslason, is much needed.

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INTRODUCTION.

PHYSICAL FEATURES.

LET us begin with the beginning. Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic, on the very edge of the Arctic Circle; just on the verge of the domain of the old giants. Frost and Snow, who lay their icy hands on one or two outlying capes and headlands. It stretches from 63° 24′ to 66° 30′ N. lat., and from 13° 15′ to 24° 40′ W. long. It contains more than 40,000 square miles, and is thus considerably larger than Ireland, the area of which we know to be 32,511 square miles. Let us suppose that we are nearing the island after the usual passage, and that we have made the land off Dyrhólaey, or Portland, on the south-west. We have then before us a narrow strip of coast, backed by huge Jökuls or ice mountains, down from whose flanks mighty glaciers stride to the sea, which is fed by them with fearful torrents. As we run along the land we have the Vestmanna Eyjar, the Westmen's or Irishmen's Isles, on our lee, and are nearly off the mouth of Markarfljót (Markfleet), which

sweeps to the main by many mouths, the eastmost of which runs sharp under the spurs of Eyjafell. Here the features of the land change. The mountains cease, and the coast trends away west in the shape of a broad irregular bay, the westernmost point of which is formed by the bold volcanic promontory which runs down from Arnesthing through Gullbringssysla, till it juts into the sea at Reykjaness. We have now a vast alluvial plain before us, which stretches away to the west further than the eye can reach, and runs up into the heart of the island, first as a dead flat, then as a swelling, rolling, upland plain, and at last is broken into dales leading up to the fells, or mountain plateau, which fill the centre of the island. Hekla "the Cloak" blocks up the background, and in the middle distance rise the three peaks of Thríhyrníngr, "Threecorner," as famous in our Saga as Eildon Hill in Scottish story. Within sight of the breakers which dash along the beach, stands a knoll or elevation, close to the midstream of Markfleet. It is almost the only bit of rising ground on the whole plain, and is well worthy of the reader's attention. It is Bergthorsknoll, the abode of Njal, the hero of our story.

Now, still sailing west, we double the headlands of Reykjaness and Skagi, and are in the noble Faxafirth. On our right is Reykiavík, and forty miles before us, right

across the firth, is Snæfell (Snowfell), that mighty mass of ice, rising more than 4700 feet above the level of the sea—a mountain which so many have wished to climb, while so few have succeeded in the attempt. In the midst of Faxafirth opens Borgarfirth, surrounded by a fruitful region, famous for having been the abode of Egil Skallagrim's son and other great men. Beyond Öndverðarness we are in Breiðifjörðr (Broadfirth), the deepest, as Faxafirth is the widest, of all the Iceland firths, which, running deep into the land, throws off to the east an arm called Hvammsfirth, on the shores of which many fruitful dales open. This is the Dale Country, a district famous in Icelandic story, and which the reader must bear well in mind. The main arm of Broadfirth runs straight on till it ends in Gilsfirth. On the eastern shore of this mighty inlet, just before Hvammsfirth branches off from it, stands Helgafell, a very sacred spot in the annals of the land, but to us chiefly noteworthy as the abode of Snorri the priest, of whom we shall hear more in our Saga. Leaving the Broadfirth, with its many lesser firths and islands, we shape our course north-west, run through the race off Látrarröst, and pass in rapid succession the West Firths. On the shores of one of these, at Hawkdale in Dýrafirth, lived Gísli Súr's son, a man of noble nature, the best skald perhaps that

the island ever bred, and famous for his adventures as an outlaw. Now for a while our course is north till we turn Horn, the North Cape. Here we almost touch the Arctic Circle. Now our course is south-east, as we run along the coast into Strandarflói and Húnaflói, where the water so eats into the land at Bitrufirth as nearly to join Gilsfirth at the top of Broadfirth on the west and so to make the north-west district of the land, which we have just sailed round, an island of itself. Doubling another bluff-headed cape, we open the Skagafirth and sight Drángey, the Drongs, famous for Grettir the strong, the greatest of all Icelandic outlaws, and his fate; and so sailing east we come to one of the most famous districts in Iceland, the great island firth, Eyjafirth. Well up the firth, on the western shore, lay Modruvale (Möðruvellir), the abode of Gudmund the powerful, one of the greatest of Iceland's chiefs, and of whom we shall hear in our story. Next we come to Skjálfandi the "quaking, trembling" sheet of water, and Axefirth. Rounding the wild headland of Rifstangi, where we are fairly within the Arctic Circle, we skim across Thistlefirth, and doubling Lánganes, Longness, we steer south-east for Weaponfirth and the districts watered by the two great Jokul rivers, Jökulsdalewater and Lagarfleet. Now we run past the East Firths, which extend from

Seydisfirth to Hornfirth, and pass many places mentioned in our Saga. Next we reach the narrow strip of foreshore, over which tower the hideous wastes of the Vatna Jökul, one peak of which, the Öræfa Jökul, is the highest point in the island, rising to more than 6400 feet; and now we sight Ingolf's Höfði, Ingolf's Head, the first land made by the first settler from Norway, which juts out from an iron-bound coast, and has had a bad name, time out of mind, for the many wrecks which have happened underneath or near it. A few miles up the country just above it is Swinefell, the abode of Flosi, a man whom we shall soon know well. Further south-west along the coast are the great sands of Skeidará and the district of Meðalland, Middleland, once so fair, but wasted at the end of the last century, by the fearful eruptions of the Skaptá-Jokul. Above Middleland is Síða "the Side," a strip of hillside country famous for the virtues of Hall of the Side. Now we near the stupendous crags of Höfðabrekka, Headbrink, where the mountains almost stride into the main; and a few miles more bring us back to Dyrhólaey, or Portland, whence we began our voyage. A glance at the map will shew that the heart of the island is an elevated plateau out of which have risen peaks and blocks, bluffs and needles, such as Baula, and Bláfell and Eldborg, together with great

layers and ridges of lava, at the bidding of the volcanic fire which works so wildly in the bowels of the earth. Out of those regions, alternately the prey of fire and frost, issue many streams, which vary in depth and bulk, as rains fall or snow melts. The chief of these for length and size are the Thurso (Þjórsá) and Markfleet (Markarfljót), in the south-west. The two Whitewaters (Hvítá), one of which runs into the sea in the south-west at Eyrar, the other further west in Borgarfirth. In the north, the chief streams are the Blandwater (Blandá), which runs into Hunafirth; Quakewater (Skjálfandafljót) which runs into Skjálfandi Bay; and Jökul-water which runs into Axefirth. In the north-east, two great streams run down, side by side, from the northern face of the mighty Vatna Jökul, the Lagarfleet and Jökulsdale-water. They both fall into the sea at Hèraðsflói. On the south-east coast, the course of the rivers is shorter, but they are the worst of all to cross, fed as they are by the immense glaciers which lie close behind them, and rushing to the sea with a quick fall and straight course. The worst of all these streams is said to be the Fulilæk, or Jökul-water, which falls into the sea between Solheim and Skogar, and drains the Myrdal Jökul, one of the ravines of which, Kötlugjá, has been during the last summer (1860) the scene of the latest eruption of volcanic fire in Iceland.

FIRST SETTLERS.

Such is a rapid sketch of the physical features of Iceland. If we look at the early history of the island we shall find that it had been visited long before the Norwegian sea-rovers ever sought its shores. Already in the eighth century of the Christian era it was well known to a class of men who have left their traces in almost every one of the outlying islands of the west. These were the Culdee anchorites, who sought those solitudes for the purposes of prayer and religious exercises, a class not likely to spread, since they were no lovers of women, but who left traces behind them in their cells and church furniture which were recognised by the early Icelanders themselves as having been the handiwork of Christian men. But besides these Icelandic traditions we have positive evidence of the fact. Dicuilus, an Irish monk, who, in the year 825, wrote a work, De Mensurâ Orbis, relates that at least thirty years before he had seen and spoken with several monks who had visited the island of Thile, as they called it. Besides other particulars, the story is accompanied with a calculation of the duration of the seasons and the length of the days at different times of the year, which shows clearly that Iceland, and Iceland

alone, could have been the island visited by these anchorites.*

The common name for all these anchorites among the Northmen was Papar. Under this name we find them in Orkney and Shetland, in the Faroe Islands, and in Iceland, and to this day the name "Papey," in all those localities, denotes the fact that the same pious monks who had followed St. Columba to Iona, and who had filled the cells at Enhallow, and Egilsha, and Papa in the Orkneys, were those who, according to the account of Dicuil, had sought Thile, or Iceland, that they might pray to God in peace.

The first settlers on Iceland, then, were Irishmen and Christian priests; the next more than half a century after were Northmen and priests also, but heathen priests, the first article of whose creed was work rather than prayer.

THE NORTHMEN IN ICELAND.

The men who colonized Iceland towards the end of the ninth century of the Christian æra, were of no savage or servile race. They fled from the overbearing power of the king, from that new and strange doctrine

* See Dicuili Liber de Mensurâ Orbis Terræ, Ed Valckenaer Paris, 1807; and Maurer Beiträge Zur Rechtsgeschichte des Germanischen Nordens, I. 35.

of government put forth by Harold Fairhair, 860–933, which made them the king's men at all times, instead of his only at certain times for special service, which laid scatts and taxes on their lands, which interfered with vested rights and world-old laws, and allowed the monarch to meddle and make with the freemen's allodial holdings. As we look at it now, and from another point of view, we see that what to them was unbearable tyranny, was really a step in the great march of civilization and progress, and that the centralization and consolidation of the royal authority, according to Charlemagne's system, was in time to be a blessing to the kingdoms of the north. But to the freeman it was a curse. He fought against it as long as he could; worsted over and over again, he renewed the struggle, and at last, when the isolated efforts, which were the key-stone of his edifice of liberty, were fruitless, he sullenly withdrew from the field, and left the land of his fathers, where, as he thought, no free-born man could now care to live. Now it is that we hear of him in Iceland, where Ingolf was the first settler in the year 874, and was soon followed by many of his countrymen. Now, too, we hear of him in all lands. Now France—now Italy—now Spain, feel the fury of his wrath, and the weight of his arm. After a time, but not until nearly a century has passed, he

spreads his wings for a wider flight, and takes service under the great emperor at Byzantium, or Micklegarth —the great city, the town of towns—and fights his foes from whatever quarter they come. The Moslem in Sicily and Asia, the Bulgarians and Sclavonians on the shores of the Black Sea and in Greece, well know the temper of the northern steel, which has forced many of their chosen champions to bite the dust. Wherever he goes the Northman leaves his mark, and to this day the lions of the Acropolis are scored with runes which tell of his triumph.

But of all countries, what were called the Western Lands were his favourite haunt. England, where the Saxons were losing their old dash and daring, and settling down into a sluggish sensual race; Ireland, the flower of Celtic lands, in which a system of great age and undoubted civilization was then fast falling to pieces, afforded a tempting battle-field in the everlasting feuds between chief and chief; Scotland, where the power of the Picts was waning, while that of the Scots had not taken firm hold on the country, and most of all the islands in the Scottish Main, Orkney, Shetland, and the outlying Faroe Isles;—all these were his chosen abode. In those islands he took deep root, established himself on the old system, shared in the quarrels of the chiefs

and princes of the Mainland, now helped Pict and now Scot, roved the seas and made all ships prizes, and kept alive his old grudge against Harold Fairhair and the new system by a long series of piratical incursions on the Norway coast. So worrying did these Viking cruizes at last become, that Harold, who meantime had steadily pursued his policy at home, and forced all men to bow to his sway or leave the land, resolved to crush the wasps that stung him summer after summer in their own nest. First of all he sent Kettle flatnose, a mighty chief, to subdue the foe; but though Kettle waged successful war, he kept what he won for himself. It was the old story of setting a thief to catch a thief; and Harold found that if he was to have his work done to his mind he must do it himself. He called on his chiefs to follow him, levied a mighty force, and, sailing suddenly with a fleet which must have seemed an armada in those days, he fell upon the Vikings in Orkney and Shetland, in the Hebrides and Western Isles, in Man and Anglesey, in the Lewes and Faroe—wherever he could find them he followed them up with fire and sword. Not once, but twice he crossed the sea after them, and tore them out so thoroughly, root and branch, that we hear no more of these lands as a lair of Vikings, but as the abode of Norse Jarls and their

udallers,* who look upon the new state of things at home as right and just, and acknowledge the authority of Harold and his successors by an allegiance more or less dutiful at different times, but which was never afterwards entirely thrown off.

It was just then, just when the unflinching will of Harold had taught this stern lesson to his old foes, and arising in most part out of that lesson, that the great rush of settlers to Iceland took place. We have already seen that Ingolf and others had settled in Iceland from 874 downwards, but it was not until nearly twenty years afterwards that the island began to be thickly peopled. More than half of the names of the first colonists contained in the venerable Landnáma Book —the Book of Lots, the Doomsday of Iceland, and far livelier reading than that of the Conqueror—are those of Northmen who had been before settled in the British Isles. Our own country then was the great stepping-

* Udaller—freeholder—that is, the holder of certain property as his own, óðal, without any superior lord. The Low Latin allodium was made out of the word, whence our allodial. For every information as to the rights of the Orkney udallers, see "Oppressions in Orkney and Zetland," presented to the Maitland and Abbotsford Clubs by Mr. Balfour, of Balfour and Trenaby, who has brought an amount of energy and learning to bear on the subject which deserves all praise.

stone between Norway and Iceland; and this one fact is enough to account for the close connection which the Icelanders ever afterwards kept up with their kinsmen who had remained behind in the islands of the west.

RELIGION OF THE RACE.

We have seen that the first comers to Iceland had been Christian anchorites. But it was not as anchorites and priests that the new settlers came. Priests indeed there were amongst them, but not Christian priests. Every father of a family was a priest in his own house, and every father of a family was a king in his own house. That was their notion of the priesthood, and that was their notion of the kingly power. They had in fact hardly passed beyond the limits of the patriarchal state. As patriarchs, then, the new settlers came, each head of a house with his kith and kin, with his sons and his daughters, with his freedmen and thralls, with his oxen and fatlings. As a priest, too, he came, to whom it belonged to fulfil the simple rites of his faith; he brought the holy pillars of his high-seat, the props of his tribunal, and the ornament of his drinking-hall, and sometimes he even brought with him a portion of the sacred soil itself, a foot or two of Norway earth, on which to pitch those holy pillars, or to rear a new shrine in a

strange land in honour of the ancient gods. A few words must suffice to sketch the most striking features of his faith. It is idle to attempt to trace, in the creed which revered Odin and the Æsir as Gods, any echo of the Hebrew doctrine of the One True God. Neither time nor place allowed that Semitic verity to resound so far. The Northman's creed was homemade, and it was made thus. First, in the gray dawn of time, came a worship of the elements. When man is weak and nature rude, he bows before the natural powers which he has not yet learnt to tame. Thus, he adores the wind that whelms his frail bark beneath the waves, the blustering storm, the driving snow, the bristling ice, the boisterous sea. He personifies them as Giants, malevolent to man. But as man grows strong, nature grows weak. He builds him houses and defies the storm, in better clothing he braves the bitter snow and frost, in better boats he sails in safety over the treacherous sea. Nature bows and bends before him, from her thrall he becomes her master — the reign of the bad powers is over. But man must have a God; and now that he has put nature under his feet, he worships himself. Thus, a new race of divinities arise, the disposers and arrangers, and subduers of nature; he tills the fields, and, as seed time and harvest succeed, he worships the God that sends the golden

grain; he tracks and fells the monarch of the wood, and he worships the hunter's God; and so on, with ships and skates, with tools and arms; for every step which he makes in social progress he fills a new niche in the Pantheon of his faith, till at last he rises to feelings and emotions, and adores his own passions as the Gods of War and Love and Song. The divinities of such a faith, like the Spectre of the Brocken, are simply the shadows of man himself, mimicking his gestures and actions, and looming huge and mighty on the misty veil which hides the Holy of Holies from his sight.

But in all religions one must rule. There are no republics, though there may be tyrannies, in matters of faith. Here, again, the Northman's choice of the Supreme God was a true reflection of himself. On emerging from nature-worship in the savage state, he passed into the patriarch, he became the father of a family, and his gods were patriarchal gods. Odin, the Great Father, was the sire of gods and men. The Æsir, the lesser gods, were his children, either by birth or choice, and they revered and obeyed him as the head of their house, whose might and wisdom far exceeded theirs. As time rolled on, the Great Father takes another name. He is now not the Father of All, but the Father of the Slain. He has become the God of Battles; and

this change marks the time when the Northman, straitened at home by the natural increase of population, and attacked from abroad by other tribes, rushes forth, conquering and to conquer, and lays new lands under his feet.

A few more strokes will complete the sketch. As Fate was above Zeus himself, so Fate was stronger than Odin and the Æsir. A gloomy Fate. Over this faith hung a cloud of melancholy which no brilliant feats of arms could brighten. It was foredoomed, and felt that it was foredoomed, to pass away. It was as it were a cornfield won from the wilderness. Around it still lowered the wild natural powers, expelled but not extinct. Nay, the day and the hour were ever drawing nigh when the God of Battles would have to fight for his own, and would fall, with almost every member of his family.

At the period of which we write, the dreaded "Twilight of the Gods," the awful day of doom, was impending. Balder, the bright and good, had passed from the happy family circle of the Æsir to the cold abodes of Hell and death, and the Northman felt, as many have felt when the heavy hand of death has been busy in their house, as though the sun of his religion were fast sinking behind a bank of cloud, and that these things

were but the warning of worse woes and still deeper gloom.

Still the Northman went cheerily and heartily to his work. It was hard, but Thor would have harder work when Midgard's Worm came. He might lose a limb. Well! Týr lost a limb when the Wolf bit off his hand; but it was his duty. He might die. Why, Odin was himself to die at last. Let him die, then, but die bravely, and haste to Valhalla as one of Odin's chosen champions, and there be ready to stand by him as his faithful servant and soldier at the great day of doom.

Above all things, too, we must bear in mind that this faith was suited to the race that believed it. They had made it for themselves—it was their own handiwork. By slow degrees, little by little, and step by step, it had sprung up among them. Every man of them believed it, for it was part of themselves, flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone, and soul of their soul; and until their stony hearts were changed, and melted before the warm breath of a livelier and a better faith, they clung to it, and died for it, for it was but the transfiguration of the natural man, with all his virtues and vices, all his feelings and passions and natural affections. Nor was it any cringing creed. The Northman was justified rather by works than faith. If he did his duty

Valhalla was his rightful meed. He looked upon the lesser Gods, even in the height of his belief, as above him in power indeed, but as only his equals in right. They were bound to protect him if he sacrificed to them and honoured them, but if he thought himself unfairly treated, even by his Gods, he openly took them to task and forsook their worship.* Numerous instances of this feeling occur in the Sagas, and, as the reverence for the old faith declined, it naturally became stronger and stronger.

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE RACE.

Besides his creed the Northman had many superstitions. He believed in good giants† and bad giants, in dark elves and bright elves, in superhuman beings who filled the wide gulf which existed between himself and the gods. He believed, too, in wraiths and fetches and

* One quotation must suffice for all:—"Hrafnkell," who had been a great worshipper of Frey, "heard that the sons of Thjostar," who had turned him out of house and land, "had killed Freyfax," a horse whom he had hallowed to Frey, "and burnt the temple. Then Hrafnkell answers and says, 'I think it folly to believe in the Gods,' and says, he will never thenceforth believe in them; and he kept his word, for from that day forward he offered no sacrifices." —Hrafnkell Freysgoða Saga, p. 24. Kjobenh. 1847.

† Such, for instance, as Barðr Snæfells Ás. Comp. Maurer. Die Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes, II. 60, foll.

guardian spirits,* who followed particular persons, and belonged to certain families—a belief which seems to have sprung from the habit of regarding body and soul as two distinct beings, which at certain times took each a separate bodily shape. Sometimes the guardian spirit or fylgja took a human shape, at others its form took that of some animal fancied to foreshadow the character of the man to whom it belonged. Thus it becomes a bear, a wolf, an ox, and even a fox, in men. The fylgjur of women were fond of taking the shape of swans. To see one's own fylgja was unlucky, and often a sign that a man was "fey," or death-doomed. So, when Thord Freedmanson tells Njal that he sees the goat wallowing in its gore in the "town" of Bergthorsknoll, the foresighted man tells him that he has seen his own fylgja, and that he must be doomed to die. Finer and nobler natures often saw the guardian spirits of others. Thus Njal saw the fylgjur of Gunnar's enemies, which gave him no rest the live-long night, and his weird feeling is soon confirmed by the news brought by his shepherd. From the fylgia of the individual it was easy to rise to the still more abstract notion of the guardian spirits of a family, who sometimes, if a great change in the house is about to begin, even show themselves as hurtful to some member of

* Hamingjur or fylgjur.

the house. He believed also that some men had more than one shape (voru eigi einhamir); that they could either take the shapes of animals, as bears or wolves, and so work mischief; or that, without undergoing bodily change, an access of rage and strength came over them,

* See the curious account of the death of Thidrandi, Hall of the Side's son, whom our Saga simply says that "the goddesses, Dísir, slew." The whole story is contained in the younger Saga of Olaf Tryggvi's son, ch. 215, pp. 192-6. We learn from it, that Thidrandi having been warned by a foresighted man not to stir out of his father's house one night, if any one knocked at the door, still sprang up when the knock came and went out, thinking it might be some one in want of shelter. When he got into the yard, he saw on one side nine women in black raiment, riding from the north on nine horses, and holding drawn swords in their hands; against them from the south came nine other women in white raiment on white horses. Then Thidrandi tried to get back into the house to tell his story, but the nine women in black raiment got between him and the door, and fell on him with their swords, while he kept them off as well as he could. Just then the wise man who had warned him sprang up from his sleep, and, going out to look for Thidrandi, found him lying on the ground sorely wounded. They brought him, and he told his strange story, but died at early dawn. Of his enemies no trace could be found. When Hall asked the wise man what all this meant, he answered, "I know not, but I can guess that these were no other women than the guardian spirits of thy race (fylgjur yðra frænda); and I suspect that a change of faith is about to happen, and that these your goddesses (dísir) must have seen what is coming to pass, and that they are angry at it, lest they should not have the respect paid to them to which they have been wont."

and more especially towards night, which made them more than a match for ordinary men. Such men were called hamrammir, "shapestrong," and it was remarked that when the fit left them they were weaker than they had been before.*

* For the actual change of shape see once for all the following quotation from "Landnáma," p. 5, ch. 5:—"Dufthak of Dufthaksholt," to whom Kettle hæng had given that portion of his land, "was very shapestrong (hamrammr mjök), and so too was Storolf, Kettle hæng's son. Storolf then dwelt at the Knoll, not far from Dufthaksholt. Those two, Dufthak and Storolf, had a quarrel about grazing. A clear-sighted man" (ófreskr maðr, that is, one who had the gift of seeing goblins and other supernatural appearances) "one evening about nightfall saw how a great bear went out from the Knoll, and how a bull went from Dufthaksholt, and how they met on Storolfsfield, and rushed at each other in their wrath, and the bear had the best of it. Next morning it was seen that there was a dell on the spot where they had met, as if the earth had been thrown out. . . They were both maimed." For the mere fit of strength, see the curious story in Egil's Saga, ch. 40, pp. 192-3, where Skallagrim Egil's father, who seems to have inherited this supernatural gift from his father Kveldulf (*i.e.*, "the Wolf of the Evening," because it was towards evening that his fit came on), plays at ball against his sons, and they have the best of it so long as the sun is high, but towards sunset the fit of strength comes over their father, and he makes wild work of the game. The belief seems to have sprung from what was then looked upon as a strange habit, that of falling asleep before going to bed. In that slumber the spirit was supposed to leave the body and roam abroad doing harm. It is rather lucky that the same belief does not prevail at present, or

This gift was looked upon as something "uncanny," and it leads us at once to another class of men, whose supernatural strength was regarded as a curse to the community. These were the Baresarks.* What the hamrammir men were when they were in their fits the Baresarks almost always were. They are described as being always of exceeding, and when their fury rose high, of superhuman strength. They too, like the hamrammir men, were very tired when the fits passed off. What led to their fits is hard to say. In the case of the only class of men like them now-a-days, that of the Malays running a-muck, the intoxicating fumes of bangh or arrack are said to be the cause of their fury. One thing, however, is certain, that the Baresark, like his Malay brother, was looked upon as a public pest, and the mischief which they caused, relying partly no doubt on their natural strength, and partly on the hold

many fathers of families who indulge in a nap after dinner would pass for werewolves or worse.

* The derivation from *bare sark*, as though they went into battle bare of armour, in their shirts, without being wounded, has lately been attacked, amongst others, by Sveinbjörn Egilsson, in his Poetical Dict. *sub voce*. He wishes to derive the first syllable from a form of the word "bear," and would make it spring from the change of shape into bears, which these hamrammir men were supposed to be able to take.

which the belief in their supernatural nature had on the mind of the people, was such as to render their killing a good work.

Again, the Northman believed that certain men were "fast" or "hard;" that no weapons would touch them or wound their skin; that the mere glance of some men's eyes would turn the edge of the best sword; and that some persons had the power of withstanding poison. He believed in omens and dreams and warnings, in signs and wonders and tokens; he believed in good luck and bad luck, and that the man on whom fortune smiled or frowned bore the marks of her favour or displeasure on his face; he believed also in magic and sorcery, though he loathed them as unholy rites. With one of his beliefs our story has much to do, though this was a belief in good rather than in evil. He believed firmly that some men had the inborn gift, not won by any black arts, of seeing things and events beforehand. He believed, in short, in what is called in Scotland "second sight." This was what was called being "forspár"* or "framsýnn," "foretelling" and "foresighted."

* The Icelanders carefully observed the distinction between this sort of foreknowledge and ordinary worldly wisdom. We have one of the best instances of this in our Saga itself, where we are told, ch. 113, vol. ii., pp. 117, that "Snorri was the wisest and shrewdest of all those men in Iceland who had not the gift of foresight;" a

Of such men it was said that their "words could not be broken." Njal was one of these men; one of the wisest and at the same time most just and honourable of men. This gift ran in families, for Helgi Njal's son had it, and it was beyond a doubt one of the deepest-rooted of all their superstitions.

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES.

Besides this creed and these beliefs the new settler brought with him certain fixed social principles, which we shall do well to consider carefully in the outset. Out of a patriarchal state of society, and a religion based upon it, rose a great groundwork of principles upon which the whole fabric of social life in Iceland rested, and which must be kept steadily in view as landmarks, if we wish to understand the origin and development of an Icelandic commonwealth. First and foremost came the father's right of property in his children. This right is common to the infancy of all communities, and exists before all law. We seek it in vain in codes which belong to a later period, but it has left traces of itself in all codes, and, abrogated in theory, still often

man like Snorri was vitr maðr, but he would not be forspár. In later times, when the old belief was dying out, this proverb was common, "spá er spaks geta," "prophecy is a wise man's guess."

exists in practice. We find it in the Roman law, and we find it among the Northmen. Thus it was the father's right to rear his children or not at his will. As soon as it was born, the child was laid upon the bare ground; and until the father came and looked at it, heard and saw that it was strong in lung and limb, lifted it in his arms, and handed it over to the women to be reared, its fate hung in the balance, and life or death depended on the sentence of its sire.* After it had passed safely through that ordeal, it was duly washed, signed with Thor's holy hammer, and solemnly received into the family. If it were a weakly boy, and still more often, if it were a girl, no matter whether she were strong or weak, the infant was exposed to die by ravening beasts, or the inclemency of the climate. Many instances occur of children so exposed, who, saved by some kindly neighbour, and fostered beneath a stranger's roof, thus contracted ties reckoned still more binding than blood itself.† So long as his

* See for this part of the subject, an essay by the same hand in the Oxford Essays, 1858, *The Norsemen in Iceland*, to which it may be allowed once for all to refer for a fuller sketch of the mythology of the race, as well as for many other points which cannot even be touched on here for want of space.

† By some the whole custom of fostering has been supposed to have arisen out of this exposure of infants. However that may be,

children remained under his roof, they were their father's own. When the sons left the paternal roof, they were emancipated, and when the daughters were married they were also free, but the marriage itself remained till the latest times a matter of sale and barter in deed as well as name. The wife came into the house, in the patriarchal state, either stolen or bought from her nearest

we know, from the account contained in Njála, which is amply borne out by other sources of information, that, down to the Change of Faith, the practice of exposure—which points terribly to the difficulty felt in supporting a family—prevailed in full force. To leave off idol worship, not to expose their children to perish, and not to eat horseflesh, are the three great abominations which all Christian men must forsake. The two first speak for themselves; the eating of horseflesh needs a word or two of explanation. Horses, though affording very wholesome food, could never have been at any time very cheap eating. The horseflesh thus branded was the flesh of the sacred horses sacrificed before the heathen altars, at the great feasts in honour of the gods. The Christian missionaries looked upon it in the same light as the meat offered to idols was regarded by the Apostles, and forbade it accordingly. To eat horseflesh was an abominable heathen practice, and as such it was literally thrown in the teeth of Thorkel foulmouth by Skarphedinn, ch. 119, p. 142, and was resented accordingly. It is strange how long a prejudice lasts. If horseflesh were cheap, there could not be more wholesome food, and yet the very notion of eating it at all would be abhorrent to the minds of most persons. It would be well if all the precepts of Christianity had become as thoroughly part and parcel of our belief as this question of meats—this prohibition to eat the flesh of animals offered to idols.

male relations; and though in later times when the sale took place it was softened by settling part of the dower and portion on the wife, we shall do well to bear in mind, that originally dower was only the price paid by the suitor to the father for his good will; while portion, on the other hand, was the sum paid by the father to persuade a suitor to take a daughter off his hands. Let us remember, therefore, that in those times, as Odin was supreme in Asgard as the Great Father of Gods and men, so in his own house every father of the race that revered Odin was also sovereign and supreme.

In the second place, as the creed of the race was one that adored the Great Father as the God of Battles; as it was his will that turned the fight; nay, as that was the very way in which he chose to call his own to himself,—it followed, that any appeal to arms was looked upon as an appeal to God. Victory was indeed the sign of a rightful cause, and he that won the day remained behind to enjoy the rights which he had won in fair fight, but he that lost it, if he fell bravely and like a man, if he truly believed his quarrel just, and brought it without guile to the issue of the sword, went by the very manner of his death to a better place. The Father of the Slain wanted him, and he was welcomed by the Valkyries, by Odin's corse-choosers, to the festive board in Val-

halla. In every point of view, therefore, war and battle was a holy thing, and the Northman went to the battle-field in the firm conviction that right would prevail. In modern times, while we appeal in declarations of war to the God of Battles, we do it with the feeling that war is often an unholy thing, and that Providence is not always on the side of strong battalions. The Northman saw Providence on both sides. It was good to live, if one fought bravely, but it was also good to die, if one fell bravely. To live bravely and to die bravely, trusting in the God of Battles, was the warrior's comfortable creed.

But this feeling was also shewn in private life. When two tribes or peoples rushed to war, there Odin, the warrior's god, was sure to be busy in the fight, turning the day this way or that at his will; but he was no less present in private war, where in any quarrel man met man to claim or to defend a right. There, too, he turned the scale and swayed the day, and there too an appeal to arms was regarded as an appeal to heaven. Hence arose another right older than all law, the right of duel—of wager of battle, as the old English law called it. Among the Northmen it underlaid all their early legislation, which, as we shall see, aimed rather at regulating and guiding it, by making it a part and parcel of

the law, than at attempting to check at once a custom which had grown up with the whole faith of the people, and which was regarded as a right at once so time-honoured and so holy.*

Thirdly, we must never forget that, as it is the Christian's duty to forgive his foes, and to be patient and long-suffering under the most grievous wrongs, so it was the heathen's bounden duty to avenge all wrongs, and most of all those offered to blood relations, to his kith and kin, to the utmost limit of his power.† Hence arose the

* By a strange anomaly, just as the parent stock of the Northmen both in Norway and Iceland, but first of all in Iceland, were labouring, after the introduction of Christianity, to do away with duels, their offspring in Normandy were making it still more the keystone of their system of legislation. Thus wager of battle, which was dying out in England along with the right of private war, shot up into a new and legal existence, as an appeal to the Christians' God, under the Anglo-Norman kings; and so the right lingered down to very recent times a remnant of heathen belief, long after the principle involved in the right had been forced to do fresh duty in a religion not of war and bloodshedding, but of peace and mercy.

† Thus Illugi, the brother of Grettir the great outlaw, preferred death at the hands of his murderers rather than to swear an oath to forego the revenge which he was bound to take. Thorstein, another brother, follows the assassin to Byzantium, and there takes ample revenge. In our Saga, Njal, otherwise so peaceful and forgiving, after he became a Christian, declares that he will not leave his burning house. "I will not go out, for I am an old man, and little fitted to avenge my sons, but I will not live on in shame." Ch. 127, vol. ii., p. 175.

constant blood-feuds between families, of which we shall hear so much in our story, but which we shall fail fully to understand, unless we keep in view, along with this duty of revenge, the right of property which all heads of houses had in their relations. Out of these twofold rights, of the right of revenge and the right of property, arose that strange medley of forbearance and blood-thirstiness which stamps the age. Revenge was a duty

The following pretty story, illustrating the duty of revenge, is from Grettir's Saga, ch. 41, Ed. Kbh., 1853:—"It fell on a morning as those brothers Grettir and Thorstein lay in their sleeping-loft, that Grettir had put his arms out of the bed-clothes; Thorstein woke up and saw that. A little after Grettir woke up too. Then Thorstein said, 'I have seen thy arms, kinsman,' said he, 'and methinks it is not wonderful though thy blows fall heavy on many, for no man's arms have I ever seen like them in my life.' 'It might have been known though,' said Grettir, 'that I could not have brought such things to pass as I have done if my joints had not been very well knit.' 'Methinks,' says Thorstein, 'I should like them better if they were slenderer but a little luckier.' 'True it is,' said Grettir, 'as the saying goes, that no man is his own maker; now let me see thy arms.' Thorstein let him see them; he was one of the tallest and slightest-made of men. Grettir smiled when he saw them, and said, 'There's no need to look longer at these, all thy ribs are cramped together, and I think I never saw such a pair of tongs as thou bearest about with thee for arms. I hardly think thee as strong as a woman.' 'That may be,' said Thorstein, 'but yet thou shalt know this, that these my slender arms will avenge thee, or thou wilt never be avenged. Who can tell what may happen till the end comes.'"

and a right, but property was no less a right; and so it rested with the father of a family either to take revenge, life for life, or to forego his vengeance, and take a compensation in goods or money for the loss he had sustained in his property. Out of this latter view arose those arbitrary tariffs for wounds or loss of life, which were gradually developed more or less completely in all the Teutonic and Scandinavian races, until every injury to life or limb had its proportionate price, according to the rank which the injured person bore in the social scale. These tariffs, settled by the heads of houses, are, in fact, the first elements of the law of nations; but it must be clearly understood that it always rested with the injured family either to follow up the quarrel by private war, or to call on the man who had inflicted the injury to pay a fitting fine.* If he refused, the feud might be followed up on the battlefield, in the earliest times, or in later days, either by battle or by law. Of the latter mode of proceeding, we shall have to speak at greater length farther on; for the present, we content ourselves with indicating these different modes of settling a quarrel in what we have called the patriarchal state.

A fourth great principle of his nature was the con-

* In the words of the Anglo-Saxon law, where the same system prevailed, he might either "buy off the spear, or bear it."

viction of the worthlessness and fleeting nature of all worldly goods. One thing alone was firm and unshaken, the stability of well-earned fame. "Goods perish, friends perish, a man himself perishes, but fame never dies to him that hath won it worthily." "One thing I know that never dies, the judgment passed on every mortal man." Over all man's life hung a blind, inexorable fate, a lower fold of the same gloomy cloud that brooded over Odin and the Æsir. Nothing could avert this doom. When his hour came, a man must meet his death, and until his hour came he was safe. It might strike in the midst of the highest happiness, and then nothing could avert the evil, but until it struck he would come safe through the direst peril. This fatalism showed itself among this vigorous pushing race in no idle resignation. On the contrary, the Northman went boldly to meet the doom which he felt sure no effort of his could turn aside, but which he knew, if he met it like a man, would secure him the only lasting thing on earth—a name famous in song and story. Fate must be met then, but the way in which it was met, that rested with a man himself, that, at least, was in his own power; there he might show his free will; and thus this principle, which might seem at first to be calculated to blunt his energies and weaken his strength of mind, really sharpened and hardened

them in a wonderful way, for it left it still worth everything to a man to fight this stern battle of life well and bravely, while its blind inexorable nature allowed no room for any careful weighing of chances or probabilities, or for any anxious prying into the nature of things doomed once for all to come to pass. To do things like a man, without looking to the right or left, as Kari acted when he smóte off Gunnar's head in Earl Sigurd's hall, was the Northman's pride. He must do them openly too, and show no shame for what he had done. To kill a man and say that you had killed him, was manslaughter; to kill him and not to take it on your hand was murder (morðvig, lönvig).* To kill men at dead of night was also looked on as murder.† To kill a foe and not bestow the rights of burial on his body by throwing sand or gravel over him, was also looked on as murder.

* In early times it seems to have been enough if the slayer left his weapon in the wound. "That," says Gísli Súr's son's Saga, "men called secret manslaughter (lönvig) but not murder, if men left their weapon sticking in the wound." Compare also Palnatoki's arrow with which he slew the Danish King Harold. The feeling here seems to be that the weapon well known to belong to the slayer was his mark that the deed had been done by him.

† See our Saga, ch. 88, vol. ii., p. 36, where Earl Hacon wishes to put Njal's sons to death at night, but Sweyn, his son, insists that it should be put off till daylight. Still more strongly in Egil's Saga, ch. 62, Ed. Reykjavík, when Gunhillda, the mother of King Eric

Even the wicked Thiostolf throws gravel over Glum in our Saga, and Thord Freedman's son's complaint against Brynjolf the unruly was, that he had buried Atli's body badly. Even in killing a foe there was an open gentlemanlike way of doing it, to fail in which was shocking to the free and outspoken spirit of the age. Thorgeir Craggeir and the gallant Kari wake their foes and give them time to arm themselves before they fall upon them; and Hrapp, too, the thorough Icelander of the common stamp, "the friend of his friends and the foe of his foes," stalks before Gudbrand and tells him to his face the crimes which he has committed. Robbery and piracy in a good straightforward wholesale way were honoured and respected; but to steal, to creep to a man's abode secretly at dead of night and spoil his goods, was looked upon as infamy of the worst kind. To do what lay before him openly and like a man, without fear of either foes, fiends, or fate; to hold his own and speak his mind, and seek fame without respect of persons; to be free and daring in all his deeds; to be gentle and generous to his friends and kinsmen; to be stern and grim to his foes, but even towards them to feel bound to

Bloodaxe, wishes to have Egil put to death at night, and Arinbjörn says, "The King (Eric) must not let himself be goaded on to do all thy dastardly deeds. He must not let Egil be put to death to-night, for night-slayings are murders."

fulfil all bounden duties; to be as forgiving to some as he was unyielding and unforgiving to others. To be no trucebreaker, nor talebearer nor backbiter. To utter nothing against any man that he would not dare to tell him to his face. To turn no man from his door who sought food or shelter, even though he were a foe—These were other broad principles of the Northman's life, further features of that steadfast faithful spirit which he brought with him to his new home.

THE LANDNAMTIDE.

Strong in this faith then, with a feeling of fate above him, weighed down by many superstitions, but upheld by a natural nobleness and manliness of character; clinging to his natural kingship and priesthood as inalienable rights, and trusting to his own good sword, the Northman steered for Iceland. In some cases a manslaughter, in some the fame of the new land, in some a prophecy, in some the invitation of friends and kinsmen who had gone before, but in most, it was the overbearing of Harold Fairhair* that led him thither. And so they came all together, simple yeomen, rich landowners, children of lords and earls, in two great streams, one from Norway and the other Northern Kingdoms, about

* Fyrir ofriki Haralds konúngs; "for the overbearing of King Harold" are the words invariably used.

874, and one twenty years later from the West, as we have said, and in such numbers that it was feared that all the best blood of the land was leaving the shores of the North Sea, and Harold tried to stop the tide of emigration by a fine.

As they neared the shores of the great island, the choice of the spot for a settlement was left to chance, that is, in those days which allowed the doctrine of chances far less than our own, to the decision of the Gods. The readiest way to ascertain their will, was to hurl those sacred pillars of the high-seat over board, to let them drive at the will of the winds and waves, and then to occupy that portion of the island which lay next to the beach where they were thrown on shore.*

The first step after landing was to view or "ken"† the land by mounting to the top of some high ground, when, if the spot seemed likely to meet the settler's wants, he

* See the Eyrbyggja Saga, where Thorolf Mostrarskegg tosses his pillars, on which the image of Thor was carved, over board, off Reykjaness, and follows and finds them to Hofsvogr (Templevoe), in the Breiðifjörðr (Broadfirth). It sometimes happened, that the pillars were not easily found; in that case a temporary abode was chosen, while the pillars were sought for. The search often lasted long; thus Ingolf, the first of all the settlers, only found his pillars after three whole years had passed; Lodmund again after three years; Hrollaugr in one; and Thord Skeggi, not until he had hunted for them for ten or fifteen years.

† "Ken the land:" kenna landit.

went on to make it his own by peculiar rites and ceremonies. This was called "to hallow the land;" and it was done by surrounding it with a ring of fires, each of which was in sight of those nearest to it on either side, or by merely lighting a bonfire at the mouth of each river, which act was supposed to hallow it, as well as all the streams which flowed into it. This solemnity was also called, to encircle the land with fire,* and the portion thus hallowed became the settler's own,† and was marked out by certain natural features or artificial signs, which formed the boundaries of his estate. Then came the work of building the house and farm buildings, the enclosure of the yard, and "town" or home fields, all necessary tasks, which, though little has been handed down to us from the earliest times as to their form and construction, we may infer from the toughness with which the race has clung to its traditions, were not unlike those which we find existing in the next century. But besides these domestic buildings, the great chiefs who were the first settlers invariably built another. This was the Hof or temple for the gods, and this it is not hard to restore. These buildings consisted of two

* At fara elldi um landit.

† Technically his landnám, his "landtaking," from "at nema land;" whence also the early settlers were called landnámsmenn.

parts, a nave and a shrine, which last is expressly compared to the choir or chancel of Christian churches. This shrine was the true sanctuary. It was built round and arched. In it, in a half circle, stood the images of the gods, and before them, in the middle of the half circle, was the altar (stalli). On it lay the holy ring (baugr), on which all solemn oaths were sworn; and there, too, was the blood-bowl (hlautbolli) in which the blood of the slaughtered victims was caught, and the blood-twig (hlauttvein) with which the worshippers were sprinkled, to hallow them in the presence of the Almighty Gods. On the altar burned the holy fire, which was never suffered to be quenched.

The worship of the gods consisted in offerings or sacrifices (blót, forn) of all living things, sometimes even of men. These for the most part were criminals or slaves, and therefore, in the first case, these human sacrifices stood in the same position as our executions. Near every Thing-field, a spot closely connected with the Temple, stood the stone of sacrifice, on which the backs of those victims were crushed and broken, and the holy pool in which another kind of human sacrifices were solemnly sunk. But these human sacrifices, though allowable, were not common; and when we read that the mythical Swedish king On offered up,

one after another, nine sons of his body for the sake of lengthening his own life, and that the Swedish freemen offered up their king Domald, and their king Olaf Tree-feller, because the harvests were so bad; and that, finally, the wicked Earl Hacon, a more historical character, offered up his own son to his favourite divinity, Thorgerda Shrinebride, in order to win the day when he was about to be worsted by the Vikings of Jomsborg, we may be sure that these were all great exceptions, for some of which might find parallels in Biblical, and for some in British history. We might as well infer that the Jews were given to human sacrifices, or the English were fond of offering up their kings, because in the one case Abraham obeyed the divine command, and in the other the Roundheads were driven by the duplicity of Charles to put him to the worst use which bad subjects can make of a weak king, that of cutting off his head, and thus making him a martyr.* Still there were human sacrifices in those times, but the bulk of the

* It may be inferred that human sacrifices were not in high favour in Iceland, first from the fact that those suspected of practising such rites, were in very bad repute. Thus, Vatndales Saga, new ed., p. 28, "There was a man named Thorolf, and his nickname was Hellblade (Anglice Rakehell); he was a very unfair man and very little loved. . . . He wrought much mischief in the country round . . . and it was much misdoubted that he must be a sacrificer of men; nor was there a man in all the Dales who

victims was of another kind. Horses were sacrificed, and oxen and swine, and sheep, which were all fattened for the festival. Brought before the images of the gods they were slaughtered, the blood was caught, and with it the worshippers were sprinkled, as well as the images, altar, and walls of the shrine. The fat was melted and the images were anointed with it, and then rubbed dry and polished. Now the sacrifice turned into a feast; the flesh of the victims was boiled in huge kettles, which swung over fires lighted down the whole length of the nave, the worshippers took their seats down rows of benches on each side, and ate the flesh and supped the broth. Beer and mead were tapped, and then the chief whose temple it was, and who filled the office of priest, rose from his high seat, in the middle of the bench,

was so hated as he." We are still more justified in drawing this inference, though certainly at a later period, from the words of Hjallti and Gizur at the Althing, just before the adoption of Christianity. "The heathen sacrifice the worst of men, and launch them over cliffs and crags, but we will choose our best men as a gift of victory to God." This was just after the heathen party had resolved, at their direst need, to sacrifice two men out of each Quarter of the island. The practice had evidently degenerated as much as it had amongst the Greeks in the time of Aristophanes, when the scapegoats for sacrifice were chosen from the dregs of the community. Comp. Aristoph. Ranæ, 732.

. . . . οἵσιν ἡ πόλις πρὸ τοῦ
Οὐδὲ φαρμακοῖσιν εἰκῇ ῥᾳδίως ἐχρήσατ' ἄν.

on the right hand of the nave, and blessed the meat and drink. His duty it was to utter the sacred toasts.* To Odin first the bowl was drained for victory and strength. The next to Njord and Frey, for peace and good harvests. A third to Thor, "the almighty God," as he was called, the Northman's darling god, and so on, to Bragi the god of song and mirth, and to Freyja, the goddess of love and beauty; last of all came the cup to the memory of friends and kinsmen dead and gone. Thus merrily and heartily did the sacrifice end, and an awful solemnity was thus softened into the festivities of an annual merrymaking. On such occasions also it was usual to make solemn vows to do this or that daring deed, by such and such a stated time;† and it was reckoned unlucky and disgraceful not to fulfil them. This was done over Bragi's cup, and he that made the vow, mounted a raised platform in order to be better seen and heard by the company. It often happened that the truth of the old Norse proverb, "Ale is another man"—answering to our "when the wine is in the wit is out"—was fully proved; and those who in their cups had vowed rash vows, woke up the next morning with

* At mæla fyrir minni.

† At strengja heit. For the feeling about them comp. Hrafnkell's Saga, p. 8; Kjöbenh. 1847.

the feeling that they had undertaken a task which they were hardly fitted to fulfil.*

But to return to the settler. After he had hallowed his lot or landnám, built his house and his temple, fenced in his fields, and raised his march-stones, he proceeded to allot portions of his possessions to his kinsmen, followers, and friends. In early times, when the island was waste, this was an easy task. There was ample elbow-room. The tracts taken by the first settlers were so immense, that they stood in need of many separate abodes to bring them into cultivation. To take only one instance of a settlement in a part of Iceland with which the reader will soon, it is hoped, be better acquainted. In the south-west of Iceland, Kettle hæing,† who came to Iceland from Naumdale in Norway, in the year 877, three years after Ingolf the first settler, took as his lot or landnám all the Rangriver vales between Thursowater and Markfleet, from the

* See the strange story of the vows made by the Vikings of Jomsborg, which led to their invasion of Norway. Fornn Saga.

† Or hæng, for the word is spelled in both ways. The meaning of the nickname is "trout," and all the Kettles in that famous family of Ravensfood bore it from the time that their mythical ancestor, the first Kettle hæng, slew a great dragon, and when his father asked what he had done, said, "I'm not going to make a long story out of every fish I see leap, but true it is that I chopped a bull-trout

shore right up to the fell. In such a tract there was room for many homesteads, and it will soon be seen with what great chiefs the district was filled. This allotment was called by various names; sometimes it is termed, "to give land," or "to show to land," on the part of the first settler, and "to receive," or "to take land in such a man's landnám," on the part of the new comer. So also, we hear of taking land "at the advice" of such a settler, or "with his leave;" and it is plain from many cases, that these expressions imply something more than mere friendly advice to a stranger as to the spot which was most likely to suit him, and point rather to leave asked and granted from a superior to one, who by that very fact acknowledged himself to be in an inferior position. Sometimes, of course, as in the case of brothers and kinsmen, or dear friends, the leave meant little more than a desire that those so close in blood should also be near in their abode; sometimes, too, the relation that existed between the new comer and the first settler was rather that of landlord and tenant than of those who met on equal terms; but in all cases of such relations, whether equal or un-

asunder at the middle." His father then gave him trout as his nickname, and he was called Kettle "hæng" or "trout" ever afterwards. See Fornaldar Sögur, ii. 111, 112.

equal, there was no doubt a feeling of reliance and dependence which often offended the free spirit of the race. Thus Hallstein son of the great chief Thorolf Mostrarskegg deems it unworthy to allow his own father to "show him to land," and betakes himself to another district, to seize an unoccupied lot for himself. Another, Halkell the brother of Kettlebjörn the old, will not hear of taking a portion of the land which his brother, a mighty chief, has settled on, but prefers to turn out an earlier settler by a duel;* and Steinuna, a woman, prefers to buy a bit of land in her kinsman Ingolf's landnám, rather than to take it from him as a gift.

It is easy to explain this dislike of the freeman, as well as of the freewoman, to have land assigned or given to them, even when it became their own allodial holding. The feeling which underlies the dislike is that which looks upon gifts, if they are not returned by something of equal worth, as degrading and dishonouring to the freeborn man. The same feeling still lingers in the hearts of all the Teutonic and Scandinavian races, but in those times it was intense. Tacitus has well caught this principle when he describes the Germans as "delighting in gifts, but as setting little store or obligation on their acceptance." That was the freeman's

* Landnáma, 5 ch. 12.

feeling. He took and he gave gifts from and to equals, and they met free and parted free; but the gifts which a superior gives to an inferior, and such a gift it was to have land given to one in another man's landnám, implied at once the undertaking of duties and obligations to the giver which must be fulfilled when he claimed them. The very act implied allegiance to a lord and master, and as such was offensive to a free spirit. Anything, in short, which hindered a freeman from meeting his equals on equal terms, was a disgrace. To take land was a gift which could not be repaid in kind. It lowered his self-respect, if it led to nothing worse, by putting him in a false position, and as such he scorned it.

But we must hasten on. The period during which the settlement of Iceland was going on lasted about sixty years. At the end of that time the island was as fully peopled as it has ever been since, and the number of inhabitants may be reckoned at 50,000 souls; an enormous number to have flocked together in so short a space of time. During all that period each chief, and his children after him, had lived on his holding, which formed a little kingdom of itself, allotting his land to new comers whose kinship, turn of mind, or inferiority in rank allowed them to accept the gift, marrying and inter-marrying with the families of neighbouring chiefs,

setting up his children in abodes of their own, putting his freedmen and thralls out in farms and holdings, fulfilling the duties of the priesthood in his temple, and otherwise exercising what we should now call the legitimate influence on those around him to which he was entitled by his strength of arm, or birth, or wealth.

CIVIL POWER OF THE PRIESTS.

We have hitherto only looked at the priesthood of these chiefs from one point of view. There was no priesthood among the Scandinavian races, if we mean by priesthood a separation of society into the two classes of priests and laymen. Church and State in fact were both one. The word for priest was goði or hofgoði (temple-priest), and, besides his priestly functions, the very circumstances of birth, wealth, and influence, which led to his fulfilling those functions, gave him social power of another kind. He was the only civil, just as he was the only religious authority—minister and magistrate in one; but in that wild and shifting state of society his power might be of a very fleeting kind. When one of these great chiefs built his hof or temple on the land which he had occupied, the neighbours flocked to it, not because they were bound to do so by any law, but because it was their natural place of

worship. The voluntary principle was then triumphant, and as it was free to any man in the neighbourhood, even in the same landnám, to build a temple for himself, so it stood free to the neighbours to worship at that temple if they chose. This fact leads to another consideration. As the influence exercised by the chiefs depended as much on bodily strength, personal prowess, and skill in arms, as on birth and wealth, it often happened that the influence of a great chief might wane as he grew old, or lost his children or kinsmen, and that the influence of others in the neighbourhood rose in the same proportion. It followed, therefore, that after a great chief had allotted all his land, he might find, at the end of his life, that he had raised up most dangerous rivals to himself, that his temple was deserted, and that the eyes of the neighbours were now turned to another lord. If a man attained a green old age, if he lived surrounded by strong and stalwart sons, he might keep his influence till his death, and the family tradition might be prolonged, as we know it was in many families; but in the contrary case, he lost the reality of his power, though he kept the shadow. He was, in fact, left like a clergyman on the voluntary principle, without a congregation.

If this was so with regard to the priestly part of his functions, it was still more so with regard to what might

be called his social and judicial duties. Besides the care of the temple, the judicial and executive belonged to him. To him it belonged to call together the Things, or meetings of the people, at stated times, to discuss public business. As priest he hallowed the Thing, encircled it with the holy bands (vébönd), and proclaimed peace while it lasted; as chief magistrate in the new land, as he had filled the same office in the old, he presided over the meeting. In trials, which were conducted on time-honoured principles which the settlers brought with them from the land of their fathers, it fell on him to name the judges, and to superintend the proceedings. In short, he takes the leadership of the district; he is bound to protect those under and belonging to him, and they owe him help and allegiance. He keeps the peace, chases robbers out of the country; in times of scarcity he takes measures to avert the evil. If foreign ships run into any port in his district he is the first to board them; they may not trade till he has settled the price at which the cargo is to be offered for sale, and he it is that fixes where the crew are to be lodged when they lay up their ship for the winter. He rides to the Things with a train of his Thingmen at his back. In later times he could call on the ninth part of his Thingmen to follow him to the Althing, and when

there they were bound to back him in his suits and quarrels, while it was his duty to stand by them, and see them righted in theirs. The power and influence of the Priest, in short, extended to every branch of what we should now call the public service; and though the power he exerted, and the subordination which he exacted, were undefined in principle, and depended much on the energy and strength of character of each possessor of the office, there can be no doubt that in the very earliest times it was not only one of great power and importance, but the sole existing authority.

One great check on the tendency of this undefined power to become arbitrary and tyrannical, is to be found in the fact before alluded to, that every Thingman was free at any time to leave the Temple and Thing of his Priest, and to join that of another. In this way public opinion might, and in many cases did manifest itself; and this carrying out of the voluntary principle in regard to the social and judicial position of the Priest, as well as in that of his purely religious functions, was some safeguard of the community against an abuse of power. In later times, at least, when the office had come to be considered in the light of family property, and could, as such, be bought and sold, this original right was acknowledged by the fact,

that it was usual for the incoming priest to call the men of the Thing to a meeting, and to ask whether they were willing to place themselves under his jurisdiction. Practically, no doubt, this right to join the Thing of another priest was of little value in the early days of the settlement, except as the assertion of a principle, as it was likely to bring down on the head of the dissatisfied dependent the wrath of his superior.

It follows from what has been already said, that the office was one of purely personal relation, and in its principle in no way depended on territory. Accidentally, and as a matter of fact, no doubt, and more especially in early times, the common people of a district, who had settled in the lot of a great chief, followed him territorially as well as personally; residence and subordination were identical. But, as we have seen, as time rolled on the island became more thickly peopled, the respect for an old house might dwindle away, while that for a new one might spring up; there, too, men worshipped the rising sun; and so, in the same district there might be two temples, which it might be equally convenient to visit, and two priests, one weak and the other powerful; but as defence or protection was one of the claims which the Thingman had upon his leader, he would naturally seek the superior

who would be most likely to afford it to him. On the other hand, a priest might change his residence, and build a new temple, and yet carry his Thingmen with him. The possession of a temple and personal power were all that he needed as a title to his office.

In this way, by the end of the period of occupation, a number of little kingdoms had been formed all round the coast of Iceland, ruled by the priests, who, at stated times, convened their adherents and retainers to meetings for the settlement of matters which concerned any or all of them. These were called "Things"—Meetings.* Each was independent of the other, and quarrels between the members of two separate Things could only be settled, as the quarrels of nations are settled, by treaty or war. In these foreign relations, it was the Priest who represented the community, and treated with his brother priests to arrange matters; but as yet they acknowledged no common bond of union, save that of race. An Icelandic state or commonwealth, in fact, did not exist.

* Meeting is "mot thing," just as husting is "house thing." The one a public gathering of the freeholders of a district, the other a gathering of householders.

THE ICELANDIC COMMONWEALTH.

At length, about sixty years after the first settlement of the island, a step was taken towards turning Iceland into a commonwealth, and giving the whole island a legal constitution; and though we are ignorant of the immediate cause which led to this, we know enough of the state of things in the island to feel sure, that it could only have been with the common consent of the great chiefs, who, as Priests, presided over the various local Things. The first want was a man who could make a code of laws; the second was a common place of meeting. In the south-east of the island, at Lon, lived Ulfljót a man who had emigrated from Norway, and who, on the mother's side, traced his descent from one of the royal houses of that country. The choice, no doubt, fell on him, because the men of that family were famous for their knowledge of the customary law, and Ulfljót betook himself to the old country to consult members of his house still wiser than himself. He sought the abode of Thorleif the wise, his mother's brother, the same who shortly afterwards assisted King Hacon, the fosterchild of our great English Athelstane, in forming the old Gula-Thing's Code. Three years he stayed abroad; and when he returned, the chiefs, who, no doubt, day

by day felt more strongly the need of a common centre of action as well as of a common code, lost no time in carrying out their scheme. While Ulfljót was away, they had settled the most knotty part of the whole question, and that was—where the great Thing, where the common place of meeting should be. While Ulfljót was doing the headwork, his fosterbrother, Grim goatshoe—a name, as Maurer remarks, probably taken from his skill as a cragsman—was doing what may be called the footwork of the scheme. He had been sent off to walk throughout the whole island, and seek a fitting spot for the commonwealth to meet. He found it south-west of the fells, where the broad lands of a freeman,* which had just been confiscated for murder, gave ample space for the annual gathering of some thousands of souls, and where there was an abundance of wood and water, as well as forage for their horses. There then, on that great sunken plain between the two Rifts, with the bright Thingvalla lake before it, and the huge Broad-

* The name of the murdered man was Kol, and that of the murderer Thorir cropbeard. They were a bad family. Thorwalld cropbeard, a grandson of Thorir, settled afterwards in the east country, and there burnt his own brother Gunnar in his house. He was also with Flosi at Njal's burning, and was killed in the battle at the Althing. See Snorri's words to Flosi on the occasion, ch. 144, vol. ii. p. 275.

shield mountain looking down on it, was the Althing set in the year 929-930, and Ulfljót's code solemnly adopted as the law of the land. Besides the accident of the confiscation, which happened so luckily just then, respect was no doubt paid to the natural advantages of the spot, which lies at the junction of the tracks which cross the desert wastes which fill the heart of the country; and some consideration was also felt for the fact that it also lay in the Thing of the priesthood founded by Ingolf, the first settler, the priest of which thus became what may be termed the high-priest of the island, inasmuch as the legal capital of the country was within his jurisdiction.*

The time of the annual meeting was fixed at first for the middle of the month of June, but in the year 999 it was agreed to meet a week later, and the Althing then met when ten full weeks of summer had passed. It lasted fourteen days. These Icelandic weeks began on Thursday. The first summer day was on the Thursday which fell between the 9th and 15th of April, and the

* The Icelandic term is Allsherjargoði—"The priest of the whole host"—under whom the whole host or body of men at the Thing for the time stood. So also the Alþing is called Allsherjarþing; and goods or property confiscated to the commonwealth Allsherjarfè.

first day of the Althing would be somewhere between the 18th and 24th of June.*

As all the judicial meetings of the Icelanders were in close connection with their religious rites, as Church and State were in fact identical, there can be no doubt that the Althing, in this point of view, was a faithful representation of the local Things. There, too, on the lavafield, seamed and scarred with the fury of volcanic fire, solemn sacrifices and great feasts were held in honour of the gods. In its legal capacity it was both a deliberative and executive assembly; both Parliament and High Court of Justice in one. There was yet no distinction between these attributes of power. Of one thing we may be quite sure, this, that it was only the great chiefs, only the priests and others of influence, who had any voice in either function. The Icelandic State was an aristocracy, and though there was no spot on earth where there were so many chiefs, and where the common man, if one may be forgiven for playing on the words, was so uncommon, still the High Court, or Court of

* After the subversion of the Republic, the opening of the Althing was advanced to the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, that is, to the 29th of June, and at later times, to the 3d and 5th of July. The Althing continued to meet annually on the old spot till 1800, when it was abolished. In 1845 it was restored, but it now sits at Reykjavík.

Laws (lögretta), at the Althing, was virtually in the hands of very few persons, constituting a committee. This was the "Court of Laws." In this court the priests had great power. They were probably members of it *ex officio*, and each priest chose two assessors to sit in it along with him. When causes were to be tried they named the judges. In all trials the judges were bound to be unanimous in passing judgment.

But with the Althing came a new office. In those days there were no books—everything was traditional; the law itself was committed to memory and the custody of faithful lips. Time out of mind there had existed amongst the nations of the North, men who, like Ulfljót, had made the customary law their study, and learnt its traditional precepts by heart. There were the lawmen or lawyers (lögmenn), a class which we shall find still flourishing in the time of which our Saga tells. They were private persons, invested with no official character,* but who enjoyed all the influence which an exclusive knowledge of any one subject, and most of all of such a difficult subject as law, must necessarily give

* This statement is at issue with Maurer, but there is not in the passages which he has collected with so much research any proof that the lögmenn had an official position. They seem to have been simply law-skilled men, "counsel," to whom men in need of advice betook themselves.

to any man in an early state of society. But when the Althing was established we first hear of a law officer properly so called. This was what we have called the "Speaker of the Law," (Lögsögumaðr). His bounden duty it was to recite publicly the whole law within the space to which the tenure of his office was limited. To him, too, all who were in need of a legal opinion, or of information as to what was and was not law, had a right to turn during the meeting of the Althing. To him a sort of presidency or precedence at the Althing was conceded; but with a care which marks how jealously the young Republic guarded itself against bestowing too great power on its chief officer; he was expressly excluded from all share in the executive; and his tenure of office was restricted to three years, though he might be re-elected at the end of that period.* On the whole, therefore, as Maurer well remarks, the office was a most honourable one, but except for the fortnight during which the sittings of the Althing lasted, it was, compared to the substantial power of the priests, both individually and as a body, one of little weight and influence. It was something, however, to have the whole control of

* It is true that many of the Speakers of the Law were re-elected over and over again, but the principle of the right to make a fresh choice was always asserted.

the law of the land during the annual fortnight to which the legal existence of the commonwealth was limited. See, for instance, Thorgeir's power at the Change of Faith, and Skapti's decisions as to the law at the trial for the Burning.

With regard to the contents and extent of Ulfljót's code, we have little information. We are told that it began with religious precepts, like the later Christian codes, and one of those injunctions, which may well provoke a smile, and which tells how superstitious the Icelanders were, has been handed down.* Another contained the order of proceedings, and the form of oath to be taken in the temples in judicial trials and suits. Every temple must contain a ring of at least two ounces in weight, and which the priest was to bear on his arm at all meetings where business of like nature was transacted. Every one who appeared before the court as party, witness, or judge, had to swear an oath on it, after it had been duly sprinkled with the blood of a victim,— "So help him Njord, Frey, and the Almighty God," that his cause, witness, or judgment was, to the best of his belief, right and just. It would, indeed, be unreason-

* This was the injunction to the captains of ships to take off the frightful figure-heads of their ships when they made the coast, lest the guardian spirits of the land should be scared.

able to imagine that the code contained much more than a collection of formularies for criminal prosecutions and civil suits, or that the memory of the earliest Speaker of the Law was more heavily burdened than with the recollection of those first elements of legislation. Ulfljót, as was right and fitting, was the first Speaker of the Law.*

With the establishment of the Althing we have for the first time a Commonwealth in Iceland. The Temples and Things and Courts of the Priests are no longer places for the transaction of the civil and religious business of separate communities, ruled by the heads of influential families, they are now subordinate parts of one State, and the centre of unity and supreme power was transferred to the Althing, as the civil and religious capital of the island. The first great blow had been struck at the patri-

* We are not told whether Ulfljót received any other reward for his skill in legislation; his foster-brother Grim got, for his trouble in finding out the best spot for the Althing, a penny (penníng) from every household in the island, which he generously made over to the temples. The following is the list of the Speakers of the Law for the first hundred years:—Ulfljót, Rafn Heing's son, 930-949; Thorarinn Ragi's brother, 950-969; Thorkell máni, 970-984; Thorgeir the priest of Lightwater, 985-1001; Grim Sverting's son, 1002-1003; and Skapti Thorod's son, 1004-1030. Almost all of these are mentioned in the Njal's Saga. We may add, that after all, there is some doubt whether Ulfljót ever held the office, as in some lists his name is omitted altogether. In any case, his tenure of office could hardly have lasted more than one year.

archal system and the voluntary principle; but though the priests lost something in the way of their independent power, and sunk in theory from little kings to sheriffs, they were amply compensated in practice by the introduction of a system which left their real influence in their local districts pretty much where it was, while it threw the Court of Laws, the very power which was superior to, and supposed to regulate their authority, into the hands of a committee chosen out of, or at least by, their own body.

PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION.

So things went on for about thirty years, when a very great step in social progress occurred, and along with it a corresponding change in the constitution of the Althing itself. This was the establishment of an organized provincial constitution of the country, by its division into Quarters or Provinces, each containing a certain number of local Things, each of which again contained a certain number of Priesthoods. The necessity of this arrangement had no doubt long been felt, but the immediate cause of its adoption was a bloody feud which arose out of the burning of one Blundkettle. This event is said to have happened in the year 962. It was the leading case of fire-raising before that of Njal. Up to that time the customary law had prescribed that all suits were to be

pleaded in the Thing that lay nearest to the spot where the cause of action arose. Instead of following up the feud by revenge, the relations of the murdered man had pursued it at law; but when they came to plead it at the nearest Thing, their adversaries, who lived close to the court, mustered in great force, and would not allow the trial to come on. Now, the plaintiffs betook themselves to the Althing, as the Supreme Court, but there again the same scenes of violence occurred, the two sides came to blows, and many were slain, and though the plaintiffs had the best of the battle, the case was one that notoriously demanded legislative interference. Thord Gellir, therefore, a great chief, called on the Court of Laws to provide a remedy for a state of things which enjoined that a man must seek his lawful rights in the heart of his enemy's country, and just in the very place where he was least likely to obtain them.

To meet this difficulty, then, the island was divided into four Quarters (Fjórðúngr), named sometimes from the points of the compass, and sometimes from the geographical features which that part of the country presented. Thus we hear indifferently of the Northlanders' Quarter, or the Eyjafirthers' Quarter; of the Westfirthers' Quarter, or the Broadfirthers' Quarter; of the Southlanders' Quarter, or the Rangriver Quarter; and we also hear of an East-

firthers' Quarter. Each of these Quarters was next subdivided into three judicial districts (þingsoknir), the inhabitants of each of which had a common place of meeting (Thing), and were bound to attend the same local court. In the Northlanders' Quarter there were four of these districts, because, when the subdivision was to be carried into effect, while the great Things of Eyjafirth and Skagafirth, which lay in the middle of the Quarter, were necessarily maintained, the dwellers to the east of the first, and to the west of the other, refused to go so far to a common place of meeting. But as we shall see, this was merely a provincial arrangement, and in the eyes of the central authority, the four Northland Things only reckoned as three. Each of those Quarters had its Quarter Thing (Fjórðungsþing), and each of its subdivisions had its Vernal Thing (Várþing), in which certain suits were in the first place set on foot, then carried to the Quarter Court, and thence, if need were, to the Althing.

Furthermore, in each of the subdivisions there were three chief temples (höfuðhof), mother churches as we should call them, to which the most distinguished persons holding priesthoods (goðorð) in each subdivision were chosen.

Thus we have three Priesthoods to each local Thing, and three local Things to each Quarter Thing, and four

Quarter Things to the whole island, as represented at the Althing.

But with this arrangement came a change in the constitution of powers at the Althing itself. Up to this time there had been but one supreme body or committee at the Althing, the Court of Laws or Lögretta, which combined the functions of a deliberative and legislative assembly, with those of a Supreme Court. Now the executive and deliberative were separated from the judicial attributes. The Court of Laws retained the former, while the latter were distributed among four Courts, representing the four Quarters, and before which all suits brought before the Althing relating to those Quarters had to be pleaded. For the rest, the judges in those courts were named by the priests as before, and they themselves all sat, now perhaps for the first time as a body, in the Court of Laws itself.

With regard to the Priesthoods themselves, it is plain that a great change now took place. Their number was now limited. There could now be but thirty-six priesthoods recognised by the State throughout the whole island; or if regard were had to the peculiar arrangement in the north, thirty-nine. We say priesthoods, because the office, by the subdivision of property, could now be held by several persons at once, though

the State only recognised their acts as the acts of one. Again, though any one who had means and influence enough might still build a temple and gather followers and Thingmen around him; still, his new temple would not be one of the recognised temples, and he would not be a priest in the sense required by the Constitution. His temple in fact would be a Temple of Ease, it would not be a mother Temple, or as we should say, a mother or parish church, and though it was allowed to exist, it existed without any legal rights as part of the machinery of civil government. The institution, therefore, while it gave to the greater portion of, and it may be to all, the old temples exclusive rights, and was thus calculated to strengthen the power of each priest whose temple had now a legal existence, taught him, at the same time, to look to the State rather than to the family for the title-deeds of his right. The second great blow, in short, had been struck at the patriarchal, and, along with it, at the voluntary system. The State was extending its power and authority from the national centre to the provinces, and binding them still closer to itself.

With regard to the way in which the grievance of which Thord Gellir complained, was remedied, it lay in this. Up to that time, each priesthood had possessed a court of its own, and after that time continued to pos-

sess it, but only as a private court, something like those of our Lords of the Manor. But henceforth, at the bidding of the central power, the Thingmen of three priesthoods met in one Vernal Thing, and thus the plaintiff or the defendant might hope for a better chance of justice from an assembly presided over by several chiefs, than if he had to sue for it at the hands of one priest and his dependents, whom the very fact that gave rise to his suit had made his enemy. Under the old state of things the priest could hardly fail to have a leaning to one side or the other, and justice could not be even-handed. These Spring Things, therefore, answered well, and we hear much of them. Of the Quarter Things (Fjórðungsþing), which must be most carefully distinguished from the Quarter Courts at the Althiug (Fjórðungsdómr), we hear less, and it is probable that they went into disuse, from the fact that if it were impossible to obtain a decision at the Spring Thing, or court of first instance, the suit would be carried at once to the Quarter Court at the Althing, as the highest tribunal. For the rest, the Spring Thing was a pattern of the Althing on a little scale; each had its Thingbrekka, or Hill of Laws, where certain notices and proclamations were given, there, too, the judges were bound to be unanimous in their sentences, and there too, the time-honoured number

of judges was maintained, since each of the three priests who presided in turn named twelve judges, thirty-six in all; for as the words of the law ran, "three twelves were to judge in all suits."

Besides the Vernal Thing, there was an autumn court, (Leiδ*) also held by the three priests of the district. It met fourteen days after the Althing was over, lasted two days, and was a court of information and execution, in order that matters which had been decided at the Althing might be carried into effect, and brought before the notice of freemen, who for any reason had been unable to undertake the annual journey to the Althing. Like every other legally constituted assembly, other matters might be lawfully brought before it.

Under the new system, we have certain information as to the constitution of the Court of Laws, so dark in the first days of the Althing. First of all, the thirty-nine priests sate in it (36 + 3); but in order to counterbalance the preponderance of the three extra priests from the north, three men were chosen from each of the three other Quarters by the priests who represented it, so that the whole number on the bench of the priests was forty-eight (39 + 9). Each of these forty-eight

* Compare the English "Leet."

chose two men as his assessors, who sate, the one on a bench before, and the other on a bench behind him, he himself sitting on the middle bench. The whole Court of Laws consisted therefore of 144, and reckoning the Speaker of the Laws, who now sate in it as president, of 145 persons.* With regard to voting, each member exercised an equal right.

With regard to the four Quarter Courts (Fjórðungsdómr), they were so constituted; each priest named one judge for each of the four courts, four therefore in all, out of the frequenters of his Thing; but as the priests of the North Quarter were to have no peculiar privileges, and as it is expressly stated that thirty-six judges were named from each Quarter, it is plain that each of the priests from that Quarter could only name three instead of four men as judges. According to this calculation, each Quarter Court consisted of thirty-six judges; so that here again the time-honoured three twelves meet us, and the whole number of judges named for the four Quarter Courts is 144, or exactly the same number as those entitled to sit in the Court of Laws.

* In later times the bishops were added, but in the days of which we write there were no bishops in Iceland.

CHIEF SETTLERS IN THE SOUTH-WEST.

After these necessary details we may now turn to our story. In the south-west of Iceland lay a district which soon attracted the eyes of the Northmen bent on settlement. This was the fertile alluvial plain which lies between the great rivers, Thursowater and Markfleet,* and which is watered by the two Rangrivers and many lesser streams. In those days Hekla had not as yet burst forth in fire and flame, no showers of sand or floods of lava had marred or seamed the beauty of the land, which is still so fruitful after centuries of volcanic action. Nor had Markfleet, worst enemy of all, eaten into the bosom of the plain which runs up miles from the seashore, and torn it asunder, to seek the sea by many shifting mouths. He still swept onward to the main, sharp round the spurs of the Eyjafalla Jokul, though in time of flood he threw off some of his strength to swell the channel called Thverá (Crosswater), in which the streams which ran down from the uplands were caught and carried away to join Thursowater just before it falls into the sea.† This fair expanse, then covered

* Þjórsá ok Markarfljót.

† It has been thought by some that Thverá did not exist in Njal's time, but it is plain from Landnáma, which mentions, Pt. 5,

with wood up to the fells, caught the eye of Kettle hæing, a man from Naumdale in Norway, who fled the land in 887 for manslaughter's sake. With him came his foster-brother Baug, and between them they seized, or rather

ch. iii., the stream in words that admit of no mistake, that there was such a channel in early times; and besides, the term Landisles (landeyjar) implies that the whole space between Thursowater and Markfleet was severed from the rest of the district by some such channel. The view has been adopted in the text which seems most likely to meet the case. The following very interesting description of this part of the country is from the pen of Mr. Metcalfe, B.D., of Lincoln College, Oxford, who made a lengthened tour in Iceland during the last summer (1860), and has kindly communicated it to the writer:—

"The Delta enclosed between the Markarfljót and the Thverá, and cut into two parts by the Affall, is a vast plain, which extends westward farther than the eye can reach, beyond the Thiorsá to the Olfusá. As I stood by the house at Hliðarendi, I saw a dark speck in the distance, which I learnt was Bergthorsknoll. One or two other specks, scattered over the expanse, are also farms, and there is nothing else visible to break the utter flatness of the scene in that direction.

"Breiðabolstaðr, Teigr, and Hliðarendi, lie all of them some hundred feet or so above the dead flat, while behind them the moorland rises upwards, backed at the Hliðarendi end by the fine mountain of the Thríhyrníngr.

"Just under Hliðarendi, to the south, is the miserable remnant of the flat fertile level, which made the spot so dear in Gunnar's eyes. It is not many feet above the bed of Thverá, which has graved itself into the bank to within a few yards of the ascent on which the house stands. When I saw the Thverá it was not very large, but

Kettle seized it, for he was the leader, all the mighty tract between the two rivers, and this is said to be about the largest landnám or lot ever taken by any of the old settlers. It took long to fill it, nor was it till about the

the great strips of loam, half severed from the bank and covered with grass, showed what the stream can do in its more savage moods.

"A mere mountain torrent descends the slope just east of Hliðarendi, in cascades, Thverá by name, and it no doubt has given the name to the branch of Markarfljót, which it joins just below.

"The chief body of water, I was told, sometimes takes one, sometimes another of the three channels. It is supposed (and I think with much probability), that in Njal's time the Markarfljót was one river, and that it wound round the base of the heights which support the Eyjafell Jokul, while the Rauðaskriður (Stóra Dímon), which rises darkly from the flat, lay near to, but on the Hliðarendi side of it.

"East of Hliðarendi the Delta contracts into a valley, and the triple stream soon becomes one, bounded on the south by the glaciers of Eyjafell Jokul, north by the slopes from the Tindafell Jokul, while the end is apparently blocked up by the Godalands Jokul. A grand scene!

"A Danish mile up the valley is the supposed site of Njal's bothy (sel). Close by the house at Hliðarendi is Gunnar's so-called cairn, where he is said to be buried.

"It took me three hours to ride from Breiðabolstaðr to Bergthorsknoll, after crossing the Thverá, the banks of which are quite low. I crossed some wet sand, into which the horses sank, caused by overflows of Thverá, which six years ago flooded a vast extent of country. We kept east, to avoid the worst morasses, and joined the Affall, by the right bank of which we entered on the hard ground.

end of sixty years, that is to say, till about the end of the landnámtide, or period of occupation, that it was fully inhabited. We then find the descendants of Kettle living at Hof, at "the Temple," and we have already

"Bergthorsknoll lies within sight of the breakers dashing against the flat shore. It lies on an elevation of a longish shape, at the south-east. This elevation terminates abruptly about a bow-shot from the Affall, and behind it no doubt Flosi hid the horses. Nearer to the river is a squarish depression, called Flosi's lág, where tradition says the horses were pastured; it is artificial, and of no depth; formerly they say it was deeper. On the opposite side of the knoll is what is called Kari's pond, a mere puddle."

In another communication, in answer to one from the writer asking for information as to the channel by which Grjotá and Thverá (the hill-stream) found their way to the sea before the greater Thverá (Cross-stream) existed, Mr. Metcalfe adds:—

"I crossed the Griotá and lesser Thverá on the flat moor below the slope I mentioned, on the verge of which are the farms. As far as I observed, the river into which they flow has bent considerably to the south before they join it; but I cannot say that I observed this matter particularly; neither did I see their junction with it. I should imagine, that in ancient times they had a small channel of their own after their junction with each other, and that that channel ran very likely pretty much where the greater Thverá river now flows.

"I can easily imagine ice or detritus from the mountains in the spring blocking up and impeding the Markarfljót, when rounding the shore under the farm of Mörk, and a good deal of the river thus taking what is in reality a straighter channel, which, after a short space, would bring it into company with the two mountain torrents above mentioned."

seen that his son Rafn was the first Speaker of the Law. Baug Kettle's foster brother, who is said to have been an Irishman by birth, settled by Hæng's advice, at ráði Hængs, in Fleetlithe, that is, on the fruitful slope or lithe, as it would be called in some parts of England, which rose toward the fell from the level plain. Here at Lithend (Hlíðarendi) at the end of the slope, he built him a house, and had three sons, Gunnar, Eyvind, and Stein.

Late in the days of Kettle, who was not a young man when he came to Iceland, a man of rank and worth, named Sighvat the red, of Helgeland in Norway, came and settled on a portion of his landnám, and became a great chief. He set up his abode at Breidabolstede, west of Markfleet. His son was Sigmund. It so happened that Sigmund Sighvat's son, and Stein Baug's son, both wanted to cross the ferry at Sandhol at one and the same time. When they reached the river's bank a quarrel sprung up between the two bands. Sigmund and his men drove Stein's house-carles from the ferry boat, and during the scuffle Stein came up and smote Sigmund a blow which proved his death.

This, which happened about the year 930, or just when the Althing was established, was the beginning of a mighty feud which lasted for ten years. The suit must have been followed up at law by Sigmund's next

of kin, for all the sons of Baug, and therefore all must have had a hand in the fray, were banished from the Fleetlithe, but they removed to abodes only a little way off. Sigmund had three sons, Mord, Sigfus, and Lambi; and two daughters, Rannveiga and Thorgerda. Thorgerda was married to Önund the little, who lived in Flói, as the rich district between Thursowater and Olvuswater was called. The house in which Stein had set up his abode was near to Flói, and Thorgerda could not bear that her father's slayer should live so near her unscathed. She goaded on Önund to avenge him. He set out with thirty men, set fire to the homestead, and when Stein gave himself up, led him out to the top of a hill and there slew him. Gunnar Stein's brother, as next of kin, now had the blood feud against Önund. He had made a good marriage, for his wife Hrafnhilda was a grand-daughter of Kettle hæng, and her brother Orm the strong was one of the most daring men of the time. They seem, however, to have pursued the feud at first at law, for Önund was made an outlaw for slaying Stein; and though he guarded himself well, and set them at defiance for two winters, at last, one Yule, they caught him in an unwary moment when he was returning from the games, and slew him with three of his men. As Gunnar rode back towards Thursowater he fell dead off

his horse from his wounds. When Önund's sons grew up they betook themselves for legal advice to their uncle, Mord Sigmund's son, as to how the feud should be followed up at law; but he, whom we shall know afterwards as the first lawyer of his time, said the thing could not be done, as their father had been made an outlaw. They might take revenge if they could. Örn, a kinsman of Gunnar, who had betrayed their father, and who was their next door neighbour, came handiest to them. On some question of pasture rights, no doubt with the help of Mord's legal skill, they got him made an outlaw everywhere except on his own land and a bowshot out of it. So they watched and watched for him, but he kept within bounds and never gave them a chance. At last they drove a herd of neat over his fields, and in his hurry to chase them out, he overstepped his limit; they rose from their ambush and slew him, and thought no harm could happen to them as he was an outlaw; but Thorleif flash, Örn's brother, got a famous bowman, Thormod Thiostar's son, to shoot a shaft from Örn's boundary towards the spot where he had been slain, and the arrow fell beyond it. Örn, therefore, was unlawfully slain, for he had fallen within a bow-shot of his own land, and stood free to his next of kin to follow up the quarrel at law. Thorleif flash and Hamond Gunnar's son, set the

suit on foot, while Mord stood by his nephew. Owing no doubt to Mord's skill, it was settled that they should pay no fine but be banished out of the Flói district. By the help of Mord, they were set up in other parts of the country, and the feud ended by Mord's betrothing his sister Rannveiga to Hamond Gunnar's son. Hamond then returned to the old house, which Baug, his grandfather, had built on the Fleetlithe, and there at Lithend was born the peerless Gunnar of Lithend, for whom, in goodness of heart, strength of body, and skill in arms, no man was ever a match in Iceland.* Close to Lithend,

* This narrative is taken from Landnáma, p. 5, ch. iii. and iv. It will be remarked, that in giving the genealogy of Rannveiga, Gunnar's mother, Njála omits all notice of Sigmund, but says that she was the daughter of *Sigfus*, the son of Sighvat the red, who was slain at Sandhol Ferry. This is plainly wrong, for it was Sigmund, and not Sigfus, who was slain there, and Rannveiga was the sister of Mord and Sigfus, and therefore could not have been her brother's child. There is, however, a difficulty to restoring Sigmund with Landnáma to the missing branch in the genealogy, because Sighvat the red only reached Iceland about the year 900. He then married Rannveiga (whom we may call the first, to distinguish her from Rannveiga the second, Gunnar's mother), and as Mord was a grown man about 930, it would be almost impossible that Rannveiga should be his grandmother. Guðbrandr Vigfússon, in his excellent essay on the Chronology of the old Icelandic Sagas—"Um Tímatal í Íslendínga Sögum i Fornöld" (Safn Til Sögu Íslands gefið út af hinu Íslenzka Bókmentafèlagi, Kaupmannahöfn, 1855)—is inclined to think that Sigmund was not the father of the children

at Gritwater (Grjotá), one of the mountain streams which ran from the uplands into the plain, lived Sigfus, the brother of Rannveiga and Mord. He had seven sons. They were Gunnar's first cousins, and play a great part in our story. Kettle, one of the brothers, and by far the best of them, lived at the Mark east of Markfleet.

We must now speak of a settler of another sex. This was Asgerda, the daughter of Lord Ar or Ask the silent. In his struggle for power Harold Fairhair had put her husband to death, a man of rank, and a hersir, that is lord, baron, in Romsdale. Asgerda then left the land, taking her sons Thorgeir Gollnir and Thorold, with her. She settled on land east of Markfleet, between Auldustein and Selialandsmull, and she married, a second time, Thorgeir of Hordaland, who had gone to Iceland from Drontheim, and was settled at Holt under Eyja-

attributed to him by Landnáma, but that he was in fact their brother. This would get over the difficulty of time; but the authority of Landnáma is so venerable that its assertions are not lightly to be disregarded, and we may find a loophole for escape, if we suppose, as indeed is suggested by Guðbrandr Vigfússon himself, that Sighvat the red, like many other of the first settlers, had children by a former marriage before he left Norway, that Sigmund was one of those children, and that Rannveiga the first was only his stepmother.

fells. The son of Asgerda by Thorgeir was Holt-Thorir and his son was Thorgeir Craggeir.* In that family was the priesthood to the east of Markfleet. Thorgeir Gollnir, her eldest son, settled at Bergthorsknoll, in what were called the Land Isles, the alluvial flat between the mouths of the rivers Thurso and Markfleet, and there was born, about 930, the hero of our story, Njal, the great lawyer and the foresighted man.

We must still speak of one or two more families. Beyond Markfleet, to the east again, settled Rafn the foolish, "one of the noblest born of men." He came out about 900, already an old man; his son was Jorund the priest, and he, not content with his lands and priesthood there away east, settled in the old landnám fashion, on a lot at Swertingsstede, west of Markfleet. He must have been a man of worth and wealth, for he married Thorlauga, the daughter of Rafn, the Speaker of the Law,

* According to this genealogy Thorgeir Craggeir and Njal were brothers' children, first cousins. One would almost suspect that a leaf had dropped off the family tree here between Holt-Thorir and Thorgeir Craggeir, for Thorgeir must have been at least thirty years younger than Njal. He was a famous man at the time of the Burning, for he had already done that daring deed of which Kari speaks, chap. 145, vol. ii. pp. 287; but he is not described as an elderly man. Njal, on the other hand, born about 930, must have been nearly if not quite 80 in 1011.

a granddaughter of Kettle hæing. On Rafn's death without sons Jorund succeeded, in right of his wife, to the estates at Hof, where stood the mother temple of the district, and he thus became doubly a priest. His sons were Valgard the guileful and Wolf Aurpriest. The latter, on the death of his father, took the priesthood east of Markfleet, which was afterwards called the Dale-dweller's Priesthood, because the head of the family lived at a homestead called "the Dale," and there, after the death of Wolf, lived his son, Runolf of the Dale.

The fortunes of the western branch of Jorund's house were still more bright; for at a later period Valgard the guileful, who had succeeded to the estate and priesthood at Hof, by a marriage after his father's example, with Unna Mord's daughter, and Sighvat the red's great-grandchild, became possessed of the priesthood of the Rangriver Vales, and so almost the whole of Kettle hæng's great lot or landnám returned to the hands of one family.

Late in the Landnámtide came out Kettlebjörn the old. He was of the royal race of Helgeland. He married the daughter of Thord Skeggi, one of the first settlers, and was famous for a ship called Ellidi, which he owned. He settled up the country to the east of Thursowater, and took as his own Laugardale and the Tongues, and

dwelt at Mossfell. Teit was his son, and Thorhalla, Thorgerda, and Thurida his daughters. Teit had a son, Gizur the white, who lived at Mossfell, and a daughter, Jorunna, who was married to Ellidagrim, who came from the north country to settle down on Teit's estates, and who lived at Tongue after marrying his daughter. Their son was Asgrim Ellidagrim's son. Thorgerda was the mother of Geir the priest, who lived at the Lithe, not far from Bridgewater (Brúará). Of Teit's family Jorunna must have been much the eldest, for Asgrim the nephew was younger than his uncle Gizur.*

Hallkell Kettlebjörn's half-brother by the mother's side, came out sometime after him, and challenged a man named Grim, who had taken the whole district called Grimsness as his lot, to give up his land or fight. Grim fought and fell, and Hallkell took his land. His son was Scarf (the cormorant), and his grandson was Otkell, whom we shall meet in the story.

We must now ask the reader to leave this district in the south-west, on which we have dwelled so long, and follow us to the Western Dales, round the head of Hvammsfirth. Here a woman, and a mighty woman, had been the first settler. This was Aud the deeply

* Guðbrandr Vigfússon, Um Tímatal, pp. 293, makes Gizur out to have been thirty years younger than his sister.

wealthy, who, when her son Thorstein the red was slain by the Scots, over a portion of whose country he had been king, set sail for Iceland, took all the Dale country at the top of Hvammsfirth, and set up her abode at Hvamm. She was old when she came, but still lived several years, and died on the wedding-day of the youngest of her grandchildren, whom she had brought out with her after their father's death. This was about 908-10. She married one named Thorgerda soon after she came out to Kolli, a Norwegian, who was called Dalakol or Dale-Kolli, and his son was Hauskuld. On Kolli's death, Thorgerda, who seems to have been of a roving turn like her grandmother, went abroad to Norway, and there married Herjolf, by whom she had a son, Hrut, who was probably much younger than his half-brother, as we find him overliving him many years.*

* Hauskuld died, as we know from Njála, in 986 or thereabouts; but Hrut, who, in spite of his misfortune with Unna, had two other wives, one probably *before*, and the other after her, lived on till after the close of the century. Though it was not fated that he should have children by Unna, he had by his other wives sixteen sons and ten daughters; and once he rode to the Althing, as Laxdæla tells us, with fourteen full-grown sons at his back, and that was thought a grand sight. When he was over seventy, about 995, he slew a man named Eldgrim, and so kept up his fame as a good swordsman to the end of his life.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE SAGA, AND OUTLINE OF THE STORY.

We have now briefly shown the degrees of kinship in which the great families stood which play a principal part in our story. When it begins, Mord the grandson of Sighvat the red—or his son, if Sigmund is to drop from the family tree—was the greatest of all the chiefs in the south-west. Born about 910, he was in the height of his strength and influence when, about 940, he brought about the settlement which put an end to the bloody feud which had raged among the cousins on the Fleetlithe. The quarrel, which had begun by the thirst for revenge felt by his elder sister Thorgerda, ended with his bestowing the hand of Rannveiga the youngest on the son of the man who had taken the lead against him; and in the birth of the peerless Gunnar we see the fruit of that reconciliation. From that period he went on adding to his power. Mord was such a lawyer "that no judgments were thought lawful unless he had a hand in them." He was so eloquent and sweet spoken that he was called the Fiddle. Though Rafn, the Speaker of the Law, Kettle hæng's grandson, lived close to him at Hof, the mother temple of the district, Mord is mentioned as one of the greatest chiefs in the south country about 940,

while no notice whatever is taken of Rafn. Ulfljót's code was still young, and we may be sure that his wise head had much to do with bringing it into working order. His lands were broad and fruitful, and his only daughter Unna, the best bred and most courteous of women, might well be called the greatest match in all the Vale country.

Having said so much, the teller of the story, in order to clear the ground before him, rushes away to the west, to speak of the half-brothers Hauskuld and Hrut; of the stalwart father and the foresighted uncle, who, besides his gifts of wit, was one of the best swordsmen of his time; and of the fair child with long locks playing before them on the floor; and how the father's joy in the beauty and stature of his child was marred by the prophecy of the uncle, who foresaw the wilful reckless character of the girl, who would stop at no wickedness to work her will, and foretold the disgrace which she was about to bring upon her noble race. No wonder that the brothers saw little of one another for a while after such a cruel utterance.*

* Njála, the teller of which only handled the history of the Dalesmen so far as he needed it for his story, passes quickly over the quarrels of the half-brothers. We know from Laxdæla that they had many differences, and those of a far more prosaic and everyday kind than this soothsaying of Hrut. In the same way, in order

The ill seed which was to bear such a bitter crop soon began to spring up. Her father seems indeed to have done everything to forward the fatal growth; tired with her wilful temper, he gave her away when a mere child, about 955, when she could not have been more than fifteen years old, to a man whom she thought beneath her in rank. They lived together but one year, when Thiostolf's pole-axe parted them. Her second match, which took place in 959, was more to her liking, and her father and uncle, warned by the fate of Thorwald, now let her betroth herself; but though she loved Glum, and behaved well at first, the old leaven shewed

to bring the half-brothers as speedily as possible into the woof of his tale, he breaks the chronological order, and tells of Hrut's betrothal to Unna, his going abroad for his inheritance, his love passages with Gunhilda, his roving exploits, return home, marriage with, and parting from Unna, and his quarrel with Mord at the Althing, before he speaks Hallgerda's marriages. But she was really married before Hrut went abroad, and was a widow the second time, and living at Laugarness when Hrut returned. Chapters ix. to xvii., both inclusive, ought therefore to come in between chapters i. and ii.; and the Saga then runs on, year for year, in unbroken chronological order, till the Change of Faith occurs, the chapters relating to which are, seemingly by mere carelessness of the copyist, misplaced in the original. It has been deemed right to restore them in the translation to their true connection; but as the chapters relating to Hallgerda's marriages seem to have been so placed by the Sagateller for a sufficient reason, they have been left as they stand in the original.

itself as soon as Thiostolf the mischief-maker crossed Glum's threshold; husband and wife quarrelled, and, again Thiostolf's axe set Hallgerda free. Twice a widow and barely twenty, with much wealth which she had got from her father and last husband, she remained single till she was thirty-five. Meantime, much had passed in the family, Hrut was betrothed to Unna, Fiddle Mord's daughter, and went abroad 963, returned in 965, married Unna, was parted from her 968, disputed with her father about her portion at the Althing, and challenged him to fight in 969.* In 970, or perhaps in the following year, Gunnar of Lithend, who was born about 945, comes into the story; he took up his cousin Unna's cause, and forced Hrut to restore Unna's goods. When Mord died, 970-71, the great lawyer of the south, another greater than he was ready to fill his place, this was Njal, the man round whom the whole story turns. He was born about 930-935, nor do we hear much about him, as he was a man of peace and law, in a lawless blood-thirsty

* Mord, though he died soon after, and though he is called by his daughter "an old man," could not have been much more than sixty at the time. This is clear, both from the date of Sighvat's coming to Iceland, as well as from the fact that it would have been thought disgraceful in Hrut to challenge a man worn out with years to fight. At sixty in those days, a man was thought to be still hale and hearty, and fit for anything.

age, till we find him with his fame full grown, and his weird foresight and legal skill acknowledged by all, about the time that Gunnar undertook his daring ride to the west to learn how to summon Hrut from the lips of Hrut himself, 971. From that time to the day of his death, he was Gunnar's faithful friend; and though he gave many men wholesome counsel, which stood them in good stead in law suits and worldly business, to no one did he feel himself more bound to afford help than to Gunnar. In 972, Gunnar goes abroad at Njal's advice—wins fame and wealth—returns 974—rides, as soon as he comes back, to the Althing against Njal's advice—falls in love with Hallgerda, who must have been about five years older than himself, he thirty and she thirty-five—makes up his quarrel with Hrut and Hauskuld—marries the widow, and brings her home to Lithend.

Njal's forebodings quickly came to pass. Hallgerda soon quarrels with Bergthora, Njal's high-spirited, brave-hearted wife. Now came a run of five years,* each marked by manslaughters committed by one house against the other. It is all the womens work, and

* The slaying of Swart, 975; the slaying of Kol, 976; the slaying of Atli, 977; the slaying of Brynjolf the unruly, 978; and the slaying of Sigmund the white and Skjold, 979.

nothing can shake the friendship of Njal and Gunnar, who pay blood fine after blood fine for thrall, freedman, and kinsman, as the deeds of blood ascend in the social scale, and are good friends again. Now we hear of Njal's sons, and the terrible Skarphedinn* stalks across the stage with his axe, the ogress of war (Rimmugýgr),† uplifted to his shoulder. After Sigmund's death, who was Gunnar's first cousin,‡ the heads of the houses saw

* The custom of the Sagateller, to clear the way by telling as much as possible about a family when one member is mentioned, is likely to mislead the reader as to the age of Njal's sons. Thus, after he has mentioned Njal and his children, told their names and described their aspect with a minuteness from which it would be possible to paint the very men, he goes on to tell us whom they married, and gets rid of that interesting subject with regard to all of them at once. It is, however, plain, that they were not married till long after, and that they were not grown men till about the time of Sigmund's slaying in 979. Guðbrandr Vigfússon thinks that the eldest of them, and he thinks Helgi was the eldest, was not much more than twenty at that time. If the Thorhalla, Asgrim Ellidagrim's son's daughter, mentioned at the quarrel between Hallgerda and Bergthora, was really Helgi's wife, and not Thorkatla, her mother, Asgrim's wife, Helgi must not only have been the eldest, but must have been married very young. There seems to have been some doubt about the matter, for the Saga sometimes calls Helgi's wife Thorhalla and sometimes Thorkatla.

† Literally the "Ogre of war."

‡ He was the son of Lambi, another of Fiddle Mord's brothers. Sigmund had other brothers, who throughout the story throw in their lot with the sons of Sigfus their first cousins.

little of one another, and there was coolness between their families, till after three years Gunnar fell into a strait, out of which he required Njal's help to set him free. Then it was that the root of their old friendship shot up into new life. There can be little doubt that this strait was that dastard's deed which Hrut's foresight had seen in the child's eyes as Hallgerda played about on the floor. Now the thief's eyes come out, and Hallgerda commits the housebreaking and fire-raising at Otkell's house at Kirkby. This happened in 982. True it was that Otkel was a weak and foolish man, made still more weak and foolish by the spiteful counsel of the liar Skamkell, but he was, as we have seen, a man of great family. The men of Mossfell were near of kin to him, for he and Gizur the white were first cousins, and not Gizur alone, but Asgrim Ellidagrim's son, and Geir the priest of Lithe were his cousins also, so that Hallgerda's wickedness, aided by Otkell's folly, raised up this mighty league against the matchless Gunnar. In 984 the suit for the theft was settled at the Althing to Gunnar's honour; next spring, 985, Otkell rode over Gunnar as he was sowing in his field. A little after, just before the Althing, Gunnar slays Otkell and Skamkell by Rangriver. At the Althing Gunnar and Gizur the white strive. That

same autumn Hauskuld Dale-Kolli's son dies a little after the birth of Thrain's son Hauskuld, afterwards the Whiteness priest.*

In 986 Gunnar and Kolskegg and Hjort fight with the band of foes from the Threecorner, who fell upon them on his return from Tongue. In 987 the atonement was made at the Althing for the lives lost the year before. In 988 Gunnar goes west to see Olaf, and has Sam, the faithful hound, given him. In the next year he slays Thorgeir Otkell's son, and is banished at the Althing shortly after 989. In 990 Gunnar's house

* Neither Hauskuld Dale-Kolli's son, nor any of the chiefs of the Dales in the West are mentioned in 785 at the Althing, when Gunnar stood in great need of their help. The year before both Hauskuld and Hrut were there. The year after, 786, Olof the peacock, Hauskuld's showy son, invited from the Hill of Laws all the great men of the land to his famous *arvel* feast, as it would still be called in the north of England; that is, to the feast which all heirs gave on succession, and at which they drank themselves into their father's estate. Mord Valgard's son gives such a feast in our Saga on the death of his father Valgard the guileful, see ch. 107, vol. ii., p. 103. Gunnar no doubt was asked by his brother-in-law to ride west, but if he was there, the feast must have taken place rather earlier in the summer than the time mentioned in Laxdæla, "when the summer would be still alive ten weeks," that is, when there were still ten summer weeks left; for in that year Gunnar was at a feast at Tongue, when there were eight weeks left of summer, and the fight at Knafahills took place on his return home.

is attacked and he is slain. His two worst foes throughout his struggles were Hallgerda his wife and Mord his cousin.*

With Gunnar's death the first fitte of the Saga ends. Of that portion the matchless champion Gunnar, the man whom all alike loved, whose heart was so good, and whose arm was so strong, is rather the hero than Njal. In the second, as the Seer foretold, the troubles

* Some difficulty occurs, however, with regard to the history of Mord Valgard's son,—the wicked son of a wicked sire,—the greatest villain, perhaps, in all Icelandic story, and one who, throughout our Saga, is the very counterpart of Loki in the mythology of the race. We know that Valgard the guileful only married Unna about 971. Mord was born in 972 at earliest. He was therefore not twelve years old when he gave his crafty counsel to Otkel about the cheese. If so, he was a very forward lad. We must add, however, that there are many instances in the Sagas of such forwardness; that twelve years was the time fixed for majority by the Icelandic law, and that at fourteen years of age a lad might betroth himself. We hear so little of Valgard the guileful, who seems to have spent most of his life abroad, that one is almost tempted to fancy that the Saga has attributed some of the father's crafty counsel to his son. Mord's marriage with Thorkatla, Gizur the white's daughter, the only being whom he seemed to have loved except himself, took place in 986, as soon as ever he had attained the legal age. After all, therefore, it may only be the difficulty which we should have in believing such a story nowadays which makes us less inclined to believe events which may have been perfectly natural in another age, and another state of society.

which had befallen Gunnar were turned against him and his house.

By this time Njal's sons were all married; but the love of foreign travel had come over two of them, Helgi and Grim, just when Gunnar was banished. At the same time Thrain Sigfus' son went abroad. Njal's sons were away five winters, the first three they spent in Orkney, 989-992. In the last of those years, Thrain left Norway for Orkney, soon after Helgi and Grim came thither, and the Saga can best tell what wrongs they suffered for his sake. After they left Norway, where they had met with such a sorry welcome, they returned to their friend Earl Sigurd in the Orkneys with Kari, who had twice saved their lives, and who was ever after their bosom friend. Two years more, 992-994, they stayed there, returning to Iceland in the last of those years, and bringing Kari, soon to be their brother-in-law, with them. In Iceland two years, 994-996, passed before Skarphedinn slew Thrain.

Now comes the Change of Faith. In 997 Thangbrand went out to convert the Icelanders by the sword rather than the word. That winter he spent with Hall of the Side at Thvattwater.* Early next spring Thang-

* "Dipwater," "Washwater," so called probably from the immersion of the Icelanders in the stream when they were baptized.

brand set out on his journey west. In the same year he slew Weatherlid the Skald on Fleetlithe, Thorwald the scurvy, and several others; but he had bad success at the Althing, and went west to Gest's house at Hagi on Bardarstrand. The next year, 999, Hjallti Skeggi's son was outlawed for blasphemy, and meantime he and Gizur had gone abroad to Norway. There they pledge themselves to King Olaf Tryggvason to carry out what Thangbrand, who returned in that year, having again spent a winter with Hall of the Side, had so signally failed to accomplish. In 1000 they set sail, and make Iceland just in time to reach the Althing. There Thorgeir of Lightwater, who had the Speakership of the Law, was won over by Hall of the Side, and perhaps by his own convictions, to bring Christianity "into the Law," as it was called; and though the heathen party murmured, the change met with no very great opposition. On the 24th of June 1000, for we can name the very day, Iceland passed from heathendom to Christianity, and the meekness of Hall of the Side, the sound reasoning of Snorri the priest,* and the common

* See the account of Snorri's famous speech in the Kristni Saga (Biskupa Sögur, I. p. 22, Kaupmannahöfn, 1858). "Then came a man running and said that a stream of lava (earthfire, jarðeldr) had burst out at Ölfus, and would run over the homestead of Thorod the priest. Then the heathen men began to say, 'No wonder that the

sense and public spirit of Thorgeir the Speaker effected what all the duels and bloodshedding of Thangbrand and Gudleif could never bring about.

After this episode we return to our story. At the time that his father Thrain was slain, Hauskuld was eleven years old. The winter after, he passed from Kettle of the Mark's house to that of Njal. He was now Njal's foster-child, and Njal soon loved him more than his own sons.* Now things are quiet, and there is a lull in the story while Hauskuld grows up under the tender care of Njal. In 1004 the noble lad was nineteen, and Njal's eyes had already, two years before, searched the country far and wide for a fitting wife for him. He found her away east at Swinefell, in Hildigunna Starkad's daughter; and here Flosi her uncle comes into the story—Flosi, the man of noble heart and good intentions, whom fate and the duty of revenge led headlong into crimes of the blackest dye. But Hildigunna, the proud-hearted maiden, would wed no one who had not a

gods are wroth at such speeches as we have heard.' Then Snorri the priest spoke and said—'At what, then, were the gods wroth when this lava was molten, and ran over the spot on which we now stand?'"

* See the account of his coming to Njal in the Saga. It was clearly a made-up matter between Njal and Kettle that the boy should pass from his mother's house to the Mark, and thence to Bergthorsknoll.

leadership over men; she must have a priest for her husband. Priesthoods might be bought and sold, but priesthoods were not often in the market, and so Njal's legal cunning, as the Saga tells us, was driven to the device of making new priesthoods all over the land, that his foster-child might fill one of them. We will go into this story more at length further on, but for the present we take the tale as we find it, and pass on to say that in 1004 the Fifth Court was established at the Althing; that Hauskuld, now the Whiteness priest, filled one of the new priesthoods; and that Hildigunna was married to a priest, according to the dearest wish of her heart.

Now all things looked prosperous. Njal, an old man past seventy, might reasonably look forward to a peaceful end, leaving his sons, men of more than forty, to inherit his land and goods. He *had* looked forward with an insight which it was believed few men possessed; and what he saw, as he had told Gunnar long before, was that his end would be the last that any man could have guessed.

Hauskuld had been settled in his own house at Ossaby, in the Landisles, close by his foster-father for about two years, when the brutal murder of Hauskuld, Njal's base-born son, by Lyting and his brothers took

place; this we put in the year 1006. The quarrel was settled much to Lyting's loss, partly by Skarphedinn's axe, and partly by Njal's stern award. But it would have been better for Lyting if he had left that part of the country at Njal's solemn warning. Three years after, at the Thingskala Thing, the blind son of the slain man avenged himself, not certainly in the miraculous way in which the story has come down to us, tampered with by monkish hands for the edification of the faithful of that age, and for the amusement of the unbelievers of this. This was in the year 1009, and the same summer Valgard the guileful came back to Iceland and died shortly after.

We have almost forgotten the great marplot of our piece. The Iago of this Icelandic tragedy, Mord Valgard's son, was now in the full venom of his nature, and his guileful father, the stubborn heathen, too old to conform, like his crafty child, to the new faith, was still true to his nature. He had handed over to his son two priesthoods and two temples; his own at Hof, the mother temple of the district, in the heart of old Kettlebjörn's lot, and the one at the Vale, which Fiddle Mord had owned, and which he took in right of his wife. What was the meaning, then, of the ruin he saw among the booths around his Thing-field, and of the buildings in progress,

and the foundations of booths laid at Whiteness? He might well say "he did not know the country for the same." The reason given by his son was not likely to give the old pagan peace on his deathbed. He acted up to his principles, he thirsted for revenge, and he took it in the way best suited to the treacherous spirit which filled the breast of both father and son alike. With his dying breath he bequeathed an inheritance of guileful slander to his son, and the bequest was soon put out to interest. Mord was a worthy executor to his father's will. In the noble nature of Hauskuld all Mord's poisoned shafts were quenched —his mind was too pure to listen to scandal. With Njal's sons the tempter was more successful. Skarphedinn's jealous temper was soon on fire. He saw ever before him the son eager to avenge his father; his impetuous spirit led on his brothers, and Kari followed them as he was bound. But even with them this poison took months to work, and, indeed, Valgard's crafty counsel to Mord had been to make himself good friends with both sides before he began to slander either of them. At last, after about a year and a half, the slanderer had his way. In 1011, Mord followed Skarphedinn and his brothers and Kari one early spring morning to Ossaby. There they found Hauskuld already up,

and busy sowing corn in his ploughed field. They all, the traitor and all, gave him wounds, Skarphedinn dealing the deathblow, and the fate of Njal and his family was sealed. At the Althing, in the same year, 1011, the award, which had cost so much trouble, was set at naught by the taunts of Flosi and the bitterness of Skarphedinn. That very autumn, on a Monday night in August, the Burners, 120 in number, worked their wicked will at Bergthorsknoll, and not a man of that famous family was left alive to take revenge but the gallant Kari, who leapt unheeded from the flames. It was well taken. Worsted at law on the Althing in 1012, by the heedlessness of Mord, who thus spoils what would otherwise have been a winning case, the avengers of Njal are only too ready to seize their arms. Now it is their turn; now they, and not the Burners, are victorious. After the fight Flosi and the Burners are banished; Flosi for three years, some of the rest for ever. But Kari and Thorgeir Craggeir Njal's first cousin, mindful of Skarphedinn, will take no atonement. Both at first, and Kari alone afterwards, pursue the Burners and slay fifteen of them. Flosi goes abroad in 1013, but only to be followed by Kari, who overtakes and slays one of his band at the very board of Sigurd the great Earl of Orkney on Christmas-day.

The year after, 1014, comes Brian's Battle, the great fight at Clontarf, so bloody and so utterly without result, that the same King Sigtrygg, who had led the host against the noble "Monarch of the Tribute," held Dublin after the battle which he had lost, just as he held it before. The Northman dynasty in Dublin was destined only to fall before kindred blood. Here fifteen more of the Burners lose their lives; Flosi sets out on his pilgrimage, but lingers a while in Wales. As soon as Kari hears this he follows him up thither, slays Kol Thorstein's son, the worst of all the band. With this deed the measure of his wrath is full. Now he too will set out for Rome for the absolution of his sins, yet he stays with Earl Malcolm in Galloway. Flosi has a year's start of him, reaches Rome in the summer of 1014, returns to Norway the next year, 1015, stays there the winter after with the Earl, and returns a thoroughly reconciled man to Iceland in 1016, having fulfilled his three years of banishment. In that year Kari reaches Rome in time to get back to Caithness for the winter. While he winters there his wife dies out in Iceland. In the summer after, 1017, he was late in getting to sea, is wrecked under Ingolf's Head at Flosi's door, seeks his hospitality in a storm, and is nobly welcomed. After a thorough atonement, Kari marries Hildigunna the

proud, and lives happily. In his old age Flosi is lost at sea, and thus ends the Story of Burnt Njal.

DAILY LIFE IN NJAL'S TIME.

After this outline of the story, we turn to the daily life in Iceland at the end of the tenth century; and first, let us look a little at the way in which these Icelanders were housed. In the tenth century the homesteads of the Icelanders consisted of one main building, in which the family lived by day and slept at night, and of out-houses for offices and farm-buildings,* all opening on a yard. Sometimes these outbuildings touched the main building, and had doors which opened into it, but in most cases they stood apart, and for purposes of defence, no small consideration in those days, each might be looked upon as a separate house.†

* The byre, which always stood near to the house, was called fjós, and from this there was sometimes, as we see from Gisli Sur's son's Saga and Droplaugarsona Saga, an entrance into the skáli.

† See Gisli Súr's son's Saga, Copenhagen, 1849, p. 88, where the skáli or hall, answering to the sitting-room; and the stokkabúr, a storehouse built of logs, were clearly separate buildings. This was in Norway, but the houses in Iceland and the houses in Norway were built on the same plan, except that the walls in Iceland were stone or turf, while in Norway, wood was the material used. See also in Njála, ch. 48, vol. i. p. 163, where Otkel says the cause of the fire which burnt down his storehouse, útibúr, was that it stood next to

The main building of the house was the stofa, or sitting and sleeping-room. In the abodes of chiefs and great men, this building had great dimensions, and was then called a skáli, or hall. It was also called eldhús, or eldáskáli, from the great fires which burned in it.*

or touched the hall (eldhús), which is wrongly translated "kitchen" in the Saga. See also ch. 76, I. 243, where Gunnar's foes attack him from the outhouses. The buildings which formed the rooms of an early Icelandic house may therefore be considered as separate erections.

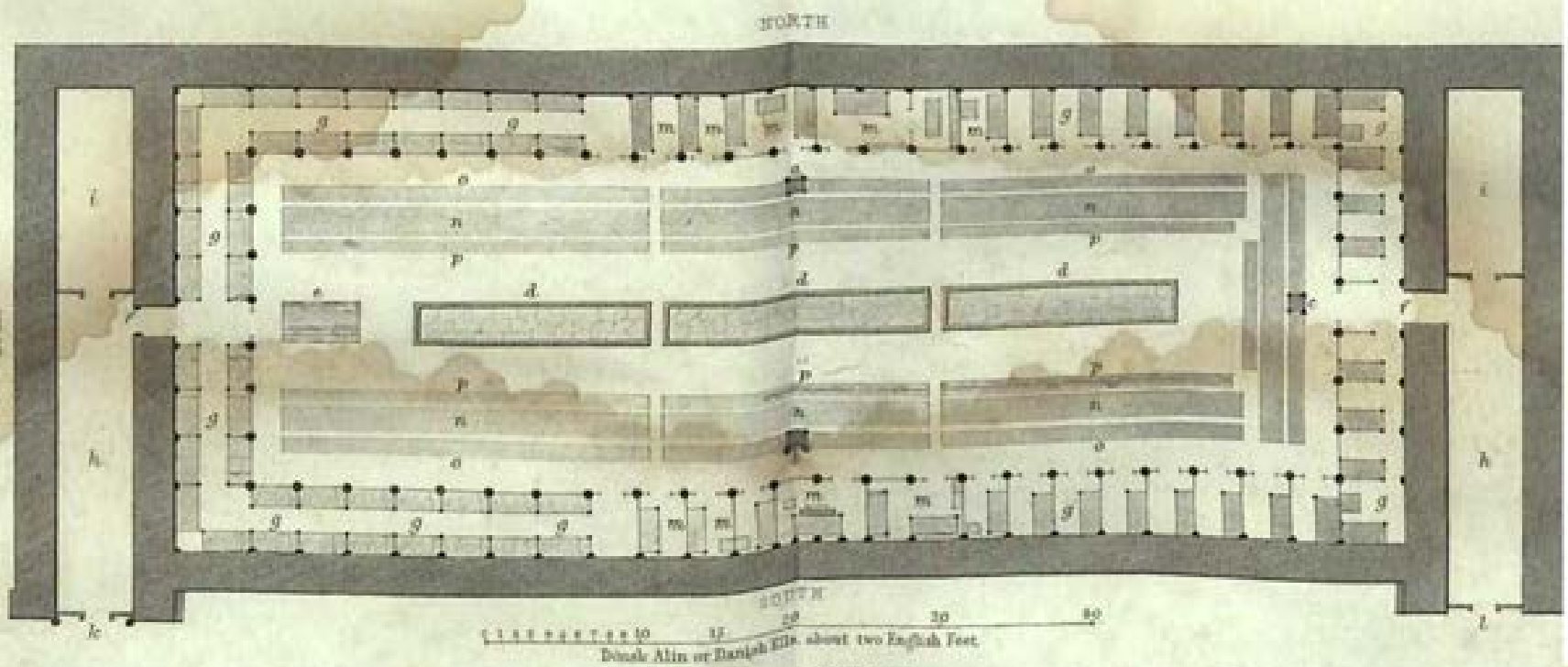
* Some of these buildings were a hundred ells or more long, such as Gísli's eldhús at Hól, which was a hundred ells long, and Bjarni Skeggbroddi's son's eldhús at Crosswick in the East, which was thirty-five fathoms long, fourteen ells high, and fourteen ells wide. From the size of his hall he was called Bjarni longhouse.—Landnáma, pp. 324, Kph., 1843. It must be remembered that as the Sagas were not written down till the middle of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, the writers often apply the terms for houses used in their time to buildings of earlier date. In the twelfth century men began to live more comfortably, and broke up their large halls into separate compartments. Thus a portion of the skáli at the upper end, where the pall or dais was, was shut off, and called stofa. Thus, Sturlúnga Saga, 5, 3, in the house at Sauðafell, mention is made of going "out of the skáli and into the stofa," where Solveiga, who had just had a child, slept with her mother, while the rest of the household slept in the skáli. So, also, in the same Saga, 5, 27, at Micklabæ, mention is made of an almanna-stofa, a common hall or skáli, and a little stofa or parlour. An instance of the confusion caused by a twelfth century scribe writing about the tenth century, occurs in our Saga, where, ch. 115, vol. ii. p. 121, it is said that Flosi went into the stofa or sitting-

Of such a hall we have given plans, which will enable the reader fully to understand its arrangement; it had

room at Ossaby, and spurned the high seat set for him on the pall or dais. In this, and in the account that follows, when it is said that Hildigunna went in and out of the stofa while Flosi was at his meal, and that she went back into the hall or skáli and unlocked her chests, and brought back the cloak into the stofa, the writer had plainly in his eye the arrangement of the skáli usual in his time, and distinguishes between the stofa cut off from the skáli at the pall or dais, and the skáli itself; but in earlier times the terms skáli and stofa seem to have been synonymous. Again, in later times, eldhús was used for kitchen, as in Sturlúnga, 4, 50, and this has caused the transcriber of the Fóstbræðra Saga, Kph., 1852, pp. 96, to make a distinction between it and the stofa, when he says that Thormóð's wounds had so far healed that he was able to walk from the stofa, sitting-room, to the eldhús, kitchen. So, again, even in Egil's Saga, ch. 46, p. 92, Reykjavík, 1856, eldaskáli is clearly used for kitchen; for at a feast it is said, "When Egil came to the homestead, he saw that the serving-men were going from the kitchen with dishes, and were carrying them into the stofa (frá eldaskála með skutildiska ok báru inn í stufuna). There was a great fire in the kitchen, and kettles over it." Where the context shows that the two were separate buildings. In the tenth century, then, stofa, eldhús or eldaskáli, and skáli, all meant the same thing,—the main building of the homestead, in which the whole family sat by day and slept by night. The kitchen in those days was not called eldhús, but soðhús, seething-house; the word occurs in Kormak's Saga, ch. 4. A century or two after, it is called eldhús, and it is still so called in Iceland at the present day. When Grágás says, I. 459, 4to ed., "Hús eru ok þrjú í hvers manns híbýlum, eitt er stofa, annat eldhús, ok iii búr." "There are three houses in every man's abode, a sitting-room,

PLATE I.

GROUND PLAN OF THE INTERIOR OF THE OLD ICELANDIC SKÁLI OR HALL.

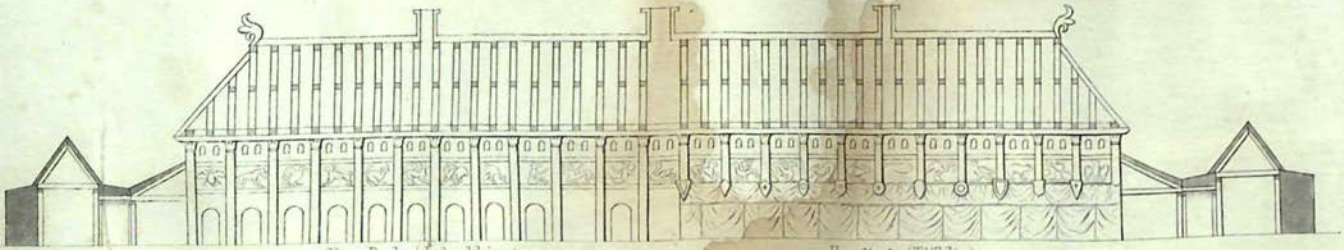


a. High Seat on the Lower Bench (Ondvegi á hinn ûndra bekk)
b. High Seat on the Upper Bench. (Ondvegi á hinn æðra bekk)
c. High Seat on the Dais or Cross Bench. (Ondvegi á palli)
d. Hearths on which the Fires were lighted.
e. Table on which the Drinking Cups stood.
f. Doors of the Hall.
g. Passages *
h. Porch or outer Hall (Andyri. Forskáli)
i. Store-rooms for Ale and Food.
k. The Pillar-door, or Main-door. The Main Door of the House (Eirldyrr or Brundadyrr)
l. The Lower Door for Women and Servants (Vennadyrr)
m. Shut Beds (Lókreckjur) with chairs and tables for the Heads of the Family
n. Tables (Borð) o Benches (Bekkir) p Stools (Forsetr.)

*Between the rows of Pillars and Posts which supported the centre and side Roofs, a passage Paralleling run all round the Hall between the pillars of the Row. In the Passage between the Pillars were Sleeping Places for the Household. The Women slept in the recesses of the passage behind the Dais.

Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh.

PLATE 3



SECTION LENGTHWAYS OF THE OLD ICELANDIC SKÁLI OR HALL.

Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh

CROSS SECTION AT ONE END OF THE OLD ICELANDIC SKÁLI OR HALL.

Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh.

two doors, the man's or maindoor (karldyrr),* and the women's or lesser door (kvennadyrr). Each of these doors opened into a porch of its own, andyri, which was often wide enough, in the case of that into which the men's door opened, as we see in Thrain's house at Gritwater, to allow many men to stand in it abreast. It was sometimes called forskáli. Internally the hall consisted of three divisions, a nave and two low side aisles. The walls of these aisles were of stone, and low enough to allow of their being mounted with ease, as we see happened both with Gunnar's skáli, and with Njal's. The centre division or nave on the other hand, rose high above the others on two rows of pillars. It was of timber, and had an open work timber roof. The roofs of the side aisles were supported by posts as well as by rafters and crossbeams leaning against the pillars of the nave. It was on one of these cross-beams, after it had fallen down

fire-house, and store-house;" and then goes on to say that if a man have both eldhús and skáli, he shall choose at the spring meeting which shall be insured in case of fire by the community, it speaks of a time when skáli and eldhús were both buildings of the same kind, while stofa was distinguished from them. The provision clearly was meant to guard the community against the expense of restoring two buildings of the same kind, one of which, in the eyes of the law, was superfluous.

* Also called brandadyrr, postdoor, or pillardoor, from the side-posts which distinguished it from the women's door, and which may be seen in the plan.

from the burning roof, that Kari got on to the side wall and leapt out, while Skarphedinn, when the burnt beam snapped asunder under his weight, was unable to follow him. There were fittings of wainscot along the walls of the side aisles, and all round between the pillars of the inner row, supporting the roof of the nave, ran a wainscot pannel (þili). In places the wainscot was pierced by doors opening into sleeping places shut off from the rest of the hall on all sides for the heads of the family (lokrekkjur).* In other parts of the passages were sleep-

* It has been thought by some that the lokrekkja, pl. lokrekkjur, was merely a press bed; but that it clearly was an enclosed space, a bed-room, in fact, with a door opening into it through the wainscot, is plain, not only from several passages in Njála, but also from the following striking account in Gísli Súr's son's Saga. Gísli's foster brother had been slain by murder, lönvig, and he, Gísli, proceeds to take vengeance in the same way. "Now Gísli goes inside along the hall and up to their shut bed, inside which Thorgrim and Thordísa, Gísli's sister, slept, and the door of the shut bed was ajar. Then Gísli goes up into the shut bed and feels about him; he laid his hand on Thordísa's breast, for she slept on the outside"—(nærr stokki; comp. Sturl. I., 207, c., hvárt vilt þú hvíla vid stokk eða þili, wilt thou sleep on the outside of the bed, *i.e.*, nearest the rail, or on the inside, *i.e.*, against the wainscot, showing that the bedstead was pushed close up to the wainscot at the back of the bedroom).—"Thordísa spoke and said—'Why was thy hand so cold, Thorgrim?' for she thought that he had laid it over her. Then Gísli warms his hand in his shirt, and stands still meanwhile on the floor of the bed-room (í hvílugólfinu), and now he lays his hand upon Thorgrim's

ing places and beds not so shut off, for the rest of the household. The women servants slept in the passage behind the dais at one end of the hall. Over some halls there were upper chambers or lofts, in one of which Gunnar of Lithend slept, and from which he made his famous defence.

We have hitherto treated only of the passages and recesses of the side aisles. The whole of the nave within the wainscot, between the inner round pillars, was filled by the hall properly so called. It had long hearths for fires in the middle, with louvres above to let out the smoke. On either side nearest to the wainscot, and in some cases touching it, was a row of benches (bekk); in each of these was a high seat (öndvegi),*

throat, and wakes him. Then Gísli lifted the bedclothes off him with one hand, but with the other hand he thrusts the spear through him, and pins him to the bedding. Then Thordísa calls out, 'Wake up, ye men in the hall, my husband Thorgrim is slain!'"

* In Fagrskinna, Christ. 1847, pp. 149, 150 (Olafs saga kyrra†), we read the following:—"Þat var forneskju siðr í Noregi ok í Danmörku ok svá í Svíaveldi, þar sem váru konúngsbúi ok veizlustofur, váru dyrr á báðum endum stofunnar, en konúngs hásæti var á miðjum lángbekk þann, er vissi móti sólu; sat þar drottníng á vinstri hönd konúngi, ok var þat þá kallat öndvegi, ok sá sess vegligastr hvárntveggja veg út ífrá til karla ok kvenna, er næst var öndvegi, en sá úvegligastr er næst var durum. Hinn

† Cfr Formmanna Sögur vi. and Heimskringla.

if the hall was that of a great man, that on the south side being the owner's seat. Before these seats were tables, boards (borð), which, however, do not seem, any more than our early middle age tables, to have been

göfgasti maðr ok sá er gamall var ok vitr, var kallaðr konúngs ráðgjafi — — en þessi maðr sat á hinn norðra pall gagnvart konúngi, ok hét þat hit úæðra öndvegi; voru nú enn konur til hægri handar honum, en á vinstri hönd karlar."—"It was the custom of old time in Norway and in Denmark, and also in Sweden, that, where there were kings' houses and feasting-halls, there were doors at both ends of the hall, but the king's high-seat was on the middle of that long-bench which was on the side of the sun (*i. e.*, on the south side). There the queen sat on the king's left hand, and that was then called 'öndvegi,' and on either hand, he or she of men or women who sat nearest to the 'öndvegi' had the most honourable seat, but he or she the least honourable that sat nearest to the doors. The noblest man, and he who was both old and wise, was called the king's councillor (ráðgjafi), but that man sat on the north bench over against the king, and that was called the lower 'öndvegi.' And now again the women were on his (the councillor's) right hand, and the men on his left."

It appears from this description that the men and women on each side of the hall sat opposite to one another. This, though true of great ladies in kings' halls in the days of Magnus the quiet, at the end of the eleventh century, was not true of the Icelandic housewives in Njal's time, who always sat, if they sat at all, on the dais at the east end of the hall. Sometimes, instead of using the term "öndvegi" at all, it is simply said that the chief sat "on mid bench," "á miðjum bekk," and the men on either side of him "outwards," towards the west end, or "inwards" towards the dais, at the east end of the hall.

always kept standing, but were brought in, with, and cleared away after each meal. On ordinary occasions, one row of benches on each side sufficed; but when there was a great feast, or a sudden rush of unbidden guests, as when Flosi paid his visit to Tongue to take down Asgrim's pride, a lower kind of seats, or stools (forsæti) were brought in, on which the men of lowest rank sat, and which were on the outside of the tables, nearest to the fire. At the end of the hall, over against the door, was a raised platform or dais (pall), on which also was sometimes a high seat and benches. It was where the women sat at weddings, as we see from the account of Hallgerda's wedding, in our Saga, and from many other passages.

In later times the seat of honour was shifted from the upper bench to the dais; and this seems to have been the case occasionally with kings and earls in Njal's time, if we may judge from the passage in the Saga, where Hildigunna fits up a high seat on the dais for Flosi, which he spurns from under him with the words, that he was "neither king nor earl," meaning that he was a simple man, and would have nothing to do with any of those new fashions.* It was to the dais that Asgrim

* Earl Sigurd's hall in the Orkneys was arranged in the good old fashion. See our Saga, ch. 153, vol. ii. pp. 324, where the Earl puts

betook himself when Flosi paid him his visit, and unless Asgrim's hall was much smaller than we have any reason to suppose would be the case in the dwelling of so great a chief, Flosi must have eaten his meal not far from the dais, in order to allow of Asgrim's getting near enough to aim a blow at him with a poleaxe from the rail at the edge of the platform. On high days and feast days, part of the hall was hung with tapestry (tjöldir, refill), often of great worth and beauty, and over the hangings all along the wainscot, were carvings such as those which Laxdæla* tells us Olaf the peacock had cut for his great hall at Hjarðarholt, and those which our Saga tells us Thorkel Foulmouth had carved on the stool

the king in his high seat on the upper bench, and has two others, one on each side, for Earl Gilli and himself. In much later times this fashion seems to have been kept up in Orkney. See the account of Earl Paul's hall at Orfir. Orkn. Saga. New edition, ch. 70, vol. i. p. 246.

* See Laxdæla, ch. xxix. p. 114, where famous stories are said to have been carved on the wood of the wainscot (á þilividinum), and on the timbers of the roof, and "that carved work was so well wrought, that the hall was thought much more grand when the hangings were down than when they were up." This shews that Olaf the peacock's carvings must have come lower down the wainscot than those shewn in our sketch; but this was, of course, a mere matter of taste. For the value set on hangings, see, amongst other passages, that in Gísli Súr's son's Saga. Pp. 111, 112. Kaupmh. 1849.

before his high seat and over his shut bed, in memory of those deeds of "derring do" which he had performed in foreign lands.

Against the wainscot in various parts of the hall, shields and weapons were hung up. It was the sound of Skarphedinn's axe against the wainscot that woke up Njal and brought him out of his shut bed, when his sons set out on their hunt after Sigmund the white and Skiolld.

Now let us pass out of the Skáli by either door, and cast our eyes at the high gables with their carved projections, and we shall understand at a glance how it was that Mord's counsel to throw ropes round the ends of the timbers, and then to twist them tight with levers and rollers, could only end, if carried out, in tearing the whole roof off the house. It was then much easier work for Gunnar's foes to mount up on the side-roofs as the Easterling, who brought word that his bill was at home, had already done, and thence to attack him in his sleeping loft with safety to themselves, after his bow-string had been cut.

Some homesteads, like those of Gunnar at Lithend, and Gisli and his brother at Hol in Hawkdale, in the West Firths, had bowers (dyngja pl. dyngjur), ladies' chambers, where the women sat and span, and where,

in both the houses that we have named, gossip and scandal was talked with the worst results.* These

* See the pretty story, which, though long, is worth telling. Gísli Súr's son's Saga. Pp. 96, 97. Kaupmh. 1849. "Thorkell Súr's son was a great man for show, and a very lazy fellow, and did little or nothing in the way of work for their household, but Gísli worked day and night. Once there was a good drying day, and so Gísli set all the men hard at work haymaking, save his brother Thorkell. He was the only one of the men at home, and had gone and laid him down in the hall after breakfast to sleep. Outside, and on the southside away from the hall, stood the bower of the two sisters-in-law, Auð and Asgerda, and there they sat and sewed. So Thorkell went thither and lay down in the sun, by the bower. Then Asgerda began to speak. 'Do help me Auð,' she says, 'and cut out a shirt for my husband Thorkell.' 'I can't do that better than thou,' said Auð, 'nor wouldst thou beg me to do so, if it were for my brother Vestein.' 'Ah,' says Asgerda, 'as to Vestein, that's quite another thing, and so I sometimes think, and indeed I love him more than Thorkell my husband, though we shall never come together.' 'I have known for a long time,' said Auð, 'what Thorkell thought about that, and how it all came about, so let us not speak any more of it!' 'Why,' says Asgerda, 'I look upon it as no harm, though I think Vestein a good fellow; besides I have heard it said that thou and Thorgrim' (a next door neighbour), 'often had meetings before thou wert given away in marriage.' 'Very true,' said Auð, 'but no harm came of it to any one, and I never set my heart on any other man than Gísli, so that any dishonour followed; and now,' says Auð, 'let us cease this talk.' So they stopped talking; but Thorkell had heard every word they said, and now he began to speak—'Hearken now to a great wonder! listen to a big lie! hear now what I say, this shall be one man's death or more;' and with that he goes off. Then Auð began

bowers stood away from the other buildings. It was in one of them, unless the word there means "cairn," that Daurud saw the Valkyries at work on the Woof of War. In very early times this dyngia was called búr, the original of our "bower." So, for instance, in Sæmund's Edda, it is said of Brynhilda, that she í búri borða vakti; and Gudruna says, "I was a maid of maids, my mother reared me bright in bower" (björt í búri); In the Danish Kæmpeviser, or heroic ballads too, as well as in our own minstrelsy, the distinction between bower and hall; the one as the men's, the other as the women's abode, was long kept up. But in Iceland the

to speak again—'Ill often comes of women's gossip,' said she, 'and so it may be that very great harm may come of this, and now let us take counsel about it.' 'Oh!' said Asgerda, 'I have thought of a plan which will be sure to answer.' 'What is that?' asks Auð. 'I will throw my arms round my husband's, Thorkell's neck, when we go to bed this night, and be as bonny and buxom as ever I can to him, and then his heart will change, and so he will forgive me. And I will tell him that this was all a lie that we have been chattering about, and that there is no truth in it. But if thou thinkest that he will not listen to me, pray tell me what to do, and what wilt thou do thyself?' 'I will soon tell thee,' said Auð; 'I will tell my husband Gísli the whole truth as to what I need to have counsel about, whether it be good or ill, and then he will be sure to give me good advice, for I am sure it will be best for me.'" We need not say that Asgerda does not persuade her lazy husband that there is no truth in women's gossip. Vestein is slain, and a bloody feud follows.

word seems to have lost this meaning quite as early as the settlement. In all the Sagas relating to Iceland dyngja is used for the woman's bower, while búr or útibúr means the safe or storehouses in which provisions and sometimes things of more value were kept. Both dyngja and búr, at the time of which we write, were outlying buildings away from the skáli.

Every Icelandic homestead was approached by a straight road (geil, geilar) which led up to the yard round which the main building and its outhouses and farm buildings stood. This was fenced in on each side by a wall of stones or turf. Near the house stood the "town" or home fields where meadow hay was grown, and in favoured positions where corn would grow, there were also enclosures of arable land near the house.* On the

* Whatever may be the doubt that now exists as to whether grain—that is, either rye or oats—will grow in Iceland, there can be no question at all that in early times corn did grow in many parts of the island. Below the homestead at Lithend lay "Acretongue,"—that is the tongue or spit of arable land which an arm of Markfleet has now nearly torn away; but in Gunnar's time it was this piece of land which was white to harvest, that made him turn back from his banishment. In his corn field, too, Gunnar is busy sowing when Otkell rides over him; and Hauskuld the Whiteness priest is slain in the gray spring morning by his assassins while hard at the same work. But it is needless to heap quotation on quotation to support what must be well known to every reader of the Sagas.

uplands and marshes more hay was grown.[1] Hay was the great crop in Iceland; for the large studs of horses and great herds of cattle that roamed upon the hills and fells in summer needed fodder in the stable and byre in winter, when they were brought home. As for the flocks of sheep, they seem to have been reckoned and marked every autumn, and milked and shorn in summer; but to have fought it out with nature on the hillside all the year round as they best could. Hay, therefore, was the main staple, and hay-making the great end and aim of an Icelandic farmer. We have seen already how Gísli set every one to work on a good drying day, and Gunnar's death in our Saga may

[1] Corn grew in Iceland in old times just as wood grew there, and wood big enough to build a few ships, and abundantly enough to be used in charcoal burning. It was not so long ago that land in the Orkneys was thought unfit to grow grain, but this delusion has disappeared before a better system of cultivation, brought in by Mr. Balfour of Balfour and Trenaby, who is as great in his way as Earl Sigurd; and the same thing would, in all probability, happen in Iceland. At present the only grain grown in Iceland seems to be the wild oat (mel), Elymus avenarius, which flourishes abundantly on the sands on the south-east of the island, on the very same spot, in fact, where our Saga tells us Kari and Bjorn, after taking vengeance on the sons of Sigfus, cut the wild oats for their horses, lest they should starve on those sands barren of all else. Olafsen and Povelsen, in their "Journey through Iceland," mention that wheat would grow in their time, nearly one hundred years ago, at Lithend.

be set down to the fact that all his men were away in the Landisles finishing their haymaking. Again, Flosi, before the Burning, bids all his men go home and make an end of their haymaking, and when that is over, to meet and fall on Njal and his sons. Even the great duty of revenge gives way to the still more urgent duty of providing fodder for the winter store. Hayneed, to run short of hay (at vera í heyþroti), was the greatest misfortune that could befall a man, who with a fine herd and stud, might see both perish before his eyes in winter. Then it was that men of open heart and hand, like Gunnar, helped their tenants and neighbours, often, as we see in Gunnar's case, till they had neither hay nor food enough left for their own household, and had to buy or borrow from those that had. Then, too, it was that the churl's nature came out in Otkell and others, who having enough and to spare, would not part with their abundance for love or money.*

Perhaps the most instructive of all the cases of hayneed was that of Blundkettle, in Hænsa Þórir's Saga (Íslend. Sög. ii., p. 131, and foll. Copenhagen, 1847), where the whole question, as well as the means taken to avert it by slaughtering as many of the horses and cattle in the autumn as would save the lives of the rest during the winter, are fully described. Here, too, like Gunnar, Blundkettle has to deal with a rich churl, Hænsa Þórir, Chicken-Thorir, but, unlike Gunnar, Blundkettle takes the hay, and leaves the price in its stead. Hence a feud arises, in the course of which Blundkettle is

These men were no idlers. They worked hard, and all, high and low, worked. In no land does the dignity of labour stand out so boldly. The greatest chiefs sow and reap, and drive their sheep, like Glum, the Speaker's brother, from the fells. The mightiest warriors were the handiest carpenters and smiths. Gísli Súr's son knew every corner of his foeman's house, because he had built it with his own hands while they were good friends. Njal's sons are busy at armourer's work, like the sons of the mythical Ragnar before them, when the news comes to them that Sigmund has made a mock of them in his songs. Gunnar sows his corn with his arms by his side, when Otkell rides over him; and Hauskuld the Whiteness priest is doing the same work when he is slain. To do something, and to do it well, was the Icelander's aim in life, and in no land does laziness like that of Thorkell meet with such well deserved reproach. They were early risers and went early to bed, though they could sit up late if need were. They thought nothing of long rides before they broke their fast.

burnt, house and all. That was the great case of fire-raising before Njal's time, and the feud which followed it, gave rise, as we have already seen, to the establishment of new arrangements as to the trial of suits in local courts, as well as to the establishment of the Quarter Things.

Their first meal was at about seven o'clock (dagverðr) and though they may have taken a morsel of food during the day, we hear of no other regular daily meal till evening, when between seven and eight again they had supper (máttmál, night-meal).* While the men laboured on the farm or in the smithy, threw nets for fish in the teeming lakes and rivers, or were otherwise at work during the day, the women, and the housewife, or mistress of the house, at their head, made ready the food for the meals, carded wool, and sewed or wove or spun.† At meal-time the food seems to have been set on the board

* See Finn Magnusen's Treatise Om de Gamle Skandinavers Inddeling af Dagens Tider. Kjöbenhavn, 1844, p. 38, foll; a work of very great interest and research. Compare also Ljósvetninga Saga, ch. viii.; Ísfirðinga Saga, pp. 38-52; Heiðarvíga Saga (Íslend. Sög. i.), pp. 273, 283, 288; and Sturlunga Saga, i., p. 78.

† It may be as well to mention here that the loom used by the Icelanders in the twelfth century and which is still used, we believe, in Iceland at the present day, as well as in Shetland, and in some other parts of the north, was a fixed upstanding loom, in the upper part of which was a roller, round which the woof, as fast as it was woven, was wound up and withdrawn from the loom. It was on such a loom that Daurrud saw the Valkyries or Corse-choosing maidens at work in Caithness before Brian's battle, while they sung that grim song "The Woof of War." This explains the words "Wind we, wind swiftly, our war-winning woof." As fast as the weird woof was woven it was wound round the roller and withdrawn. Comp. Olavius (Olafsen), "Reise igjennem Island," Kph, 1780, ii. 630, where a description and plate of the old Icelandic loom will be found.

by the women, who waited on the men, and at great feasts, such as Gunnar's wedding, the wives of his nearest kinsman, and of his dearest friend. Thorhillda Skald-tongue, Thrain's wife, and Bergthora Njal's wife, went about from board to board waiting on the guests.*

In everyday life they were a simple sober people, early to bed and early to rise—ever struggling with the rigour of the climate. On great occasions, as at the Yule feasts in honour of the gods, held at the temples, or at "arvel" "heir-ale," feasts, when heirs drank themselves into their father's land and goods, or at the autumn feasts, which friends and kinsmen gave to one another, there was no doubt great mirth and jollity, much eating and hard drinking of mead and fresh-brewed ale;† but these drinks are not of a very heady kind, and one glass of spirits in our days would send a man farther on the road to drunkenness than many a horn of foaming mead. They were by no means that

* "Hón (Þórhildr) gekk at beina ok Bergþóra Skarpheðinsdóttir kona Njáls."

† The ale was very new; it was brewed just before the feasts at which it was to be drunk. Comp. Orkney Saga, new ed., ch. 34, vol. i. p. 113, transl.:—"Earl Rognvald sat in Kirkwall, and drew thither all the stores which he needed to have for his winter quarters. He had, too, there a great band of men and much good cheer. But a little before Yule Earl Rognvald fared with a great following into the Little Papey to fetch malt to be brewed for Yule."

race of drunkards and hard livers which some have seen fit to call them.

Nor were these people such barbarians as some have fancied, to whom it is easier to rob a whole people of its character by a single word than to take the pains to inquire into its history. They were bold warriors and bolder sailors. The voyage between Iceland and Norway, or Iceland and Orkney, was reckoned as nothing; but from the west firths of Iceland, Eric the Red—no ruffian as he has been styled, though he had committed an act of manslaughter—discovered Greenland; and from Greenland the hardy seafarers pushed on across the main, till they made the dreary coast of Labrador. Down that they ran until they came at last to Vínland hit góði, Vineland the good, which took its name from the grapes that grew there. From the accounts given of the length of the days in that land, it is now the opinion of those best fitted to judge on such matters,* that this Vineland was no other than some part of the North American continent near Rhode Island or Massachussets, in the United States. Their ships were half-decked, high out of the water at stem and stern, low in the waist; that the oars might reach the water, for they were made for rowing as well as for sailing. The

* Humboldt, for instance, in his Kosmos.

after-part had a poop (lypting). The fore-part seems to have been without deck, but loose planks were laid there for men to stand on. A distinction was made between long-ships or ships of war, made long for speed, and merchant ships or byrðings, ships of burden, which were built to carry cargo. The common complement was thirty rowers, which in war-ships made sometimes a third and sometimes a sixth of the crew. All round the warships, before the fight began, shield was laid on shield, on a rim or rail, which ran all round the bulwarks, presenting a mark like the hammocks of our navy, by which a long-ship could be at once detected.* The bulwarks in warships could be heightened at pleasure, and this was called "to girdle the ship for war." The merchant ships often carried heavy loads of meal and timber from Norway, and many a one of these half-decked yawls no doubt foundered, like Flosi's unseaworthy ship, under the weight of her heavy burden of beams and planks, when overtaken by the autumnal gales on that wild sea. The passages were often very long, more than one hundred days is sometimes mentioned as the time spent on a voyage between Norway and Iceland.

* Kari's ships were thus distinguished when he came to the rescue of Njal's sons, in Scotland's Firths.

As soon as the ship reached the land, she ran into some safe bay or creek, the great landing places on the south and south-east coasts being Eyrar, "The Eres," as such spots are still called in some parts of the British Isles, that is, the sandy beaches opening into lagunes which line the shore of the marsh district called Flói; and Hornfirth, whence Flosi and the Burners put to sea after their banishment. There the ship was laid up in a slip (naust), made for her, she was stripped and made snug for the winter, a roof of planks being probably thrown over her, while the lighter portions of her cargo were carried on pack-saddles up the country. The timber seems to have been floated up the firths and rivers as near as it could be got to its destination, and then dragged by trains of horses to the spot where it was to be used.

Some of the cargo, the meal, and cloth, and arms, was wanted at home; some of it was sold to neighbours either for ready money or on trust, it being usual to ask for the debt either in coin or in kind, the spring after.* Sometimes the account remained outstanding for a much

* See our Saga, ch. vi., vol. i., p. 21, where Hrut sets off in the spring to the West Firths, to get in the money for which he had sold the wares which he had brought with him from Norway the summer before.

longer time. Among these men whose hands were so swift to shed blood, and in that state of things which looks so lawless, but which in truth was based upon fixed principles of justice and law, the rights of property were so safe, that men like Njal went lending their money to overbearing fellows like Starkad under Threecorner for years, on condition that he should pay a certain rate of interest. So also Gunnar had goods and money out at interest, out of which he wished to supply Unna's wants. In fact the law of debtor and creditor, and of borrowing money at usance, was well understood in Iceland, from the very first day that the Northmen set foot on its shores.

If we examine the condition of the sexes in this state of society, we shall find that men and women met very nearly on equal terms. If any woman is shocked to read how Thrain Sigfus' son treated his wife, in parting from her, and marrying a new one, at a moment's warning, she must be told that Gudruna, in Laxdæla, threatened one of her three husbands with much the same treatment, and would have put her threat into execution if he had not behaved as she commanded him. In our Saga, too, the gudewife of Bjorn the boaster threatens him with a separation if he does not stand faithfully by Kari; and in another Saga of equal age

and truthfulness, we hear of one great lady who parted from her husband, because, in playfully throwing a pillow of down at her, he unwittingly struck her with his finger. In point of fact, the customary law allowed great latitude to separations, at the will of either party, if good reason could be shown for the desired change. It thought that the worst service it could render to those whom it was intended to protect would be to force two people to live together against their will, or even against the will of only one of them, if that person considered him or herself, as the case might be, ill-treated or neglected. Gunnar no doubt could have separated himself from Hallgerda for her thieving, just as Hallgerda could have parted from Gunnar for giving her that slap in the face; but they lived on, to Gunnar's cost and Hallgerda's infamy. In marriage contracts the rights of brides, like Unna the great heiress of the south-west, or Hallgerda the flower of the western dales, were amply provided for. In the latter case it was a curious fact that this wicked woman retained possession of Laugarness, near Reykjavik, which was part of her second husband Glum's property, to her dying day, and there, according to constant tradition, she was buried in a cairn which is still shown at the present time, and which is said to be always green, summer and

winter alike.* Where marriages were so much matter of barter and bargain, the father's will went for so much and that of the children for so little, love matches were comparatively rare; and if the songs of Gunnlaugr snaketongue and Kormak have described the charms of their fair ones, and the warmth of their passion in glowing terms, the ordinary Icelandic marriage of the tenth century was much more a matter of business, in the first place, than of love. Though strong affection may have sprung up afterwards between husband and wife, the love was rather a consequence of the marriage than the marriage a result of the love.

When death came it was the duty of the next of kin to close the eyes and nostrils† of the departed, and our Saga, in that most touching story of Rodny's behaviour after the death of her son Hauskuld, affords an instance of the custom. When Njal asks why she, the mother, as next of kin, had not closed the eyes and nostrils of the corpse, the mother answers, "That duty I meant for Skarphedinn." Skarphedinn then performs the duty.

* Maurer Isländische Sagen, Leipzig, 1860, 220-1. The reason given by modern tradition for this choice of a burying place, was, that she might be near the Bishop, a fact which shows how traditions grow, for the Bishop's residence was not removed to Laugarness till a very recent date.

† "At veita nábjargir."

and, at the same time, undertakes the duty of revenge. In heathen times the burial took place on a "how" or cairn, in some commanding position near the abode of the dead, and now came another duty. This was the binding on of the "hellshoes," which the deceased was believed to need in heathen times on his way either to Valhalla's bright hall of warmth and mirth, or to Hell's dark realm of cold and sorrow. That duty over, the body was laid in the cairn with goods and arms, sometimes as we see was the case with Gunnar in a sitting posture; sometimes even in a ship, but always in a chamber formed of baulks of timber or blocks of stone, over which earth and gravel were piled.*

* See the very curious account of the binding on the "hellshoes" in Gísli Súr's son's Saga. Kph. 1849, p. 23. "Gísli," after his brother-in-law Vestein had been slain in his house, "makes ready with all his men to lay Vestein in a cairn on that sandhill under which Sedgetarn also lies, below the house at Sæbol. And when Gísli had set out on his way, then Thorgrim" —who had secretly slain Vestein—" came with many men to the cairn-making. But when they had laid Vestein in the cairn, as was the custom, Thorgrim went up to Gísli and said, 'It is right and customary,' says he, 'to bind hellshoon on men, which they shall walk in to Valhalla, and I will do that for Vestein.' And when he had done that, then he said, 'I cannot bind on hellshoon at all if these loosen.'" So also, in the later version of the Saga (p. 107), "And when they had made the cairn, Thorgrim the priest goes up to Gísli and said, 'Now it is a custom,

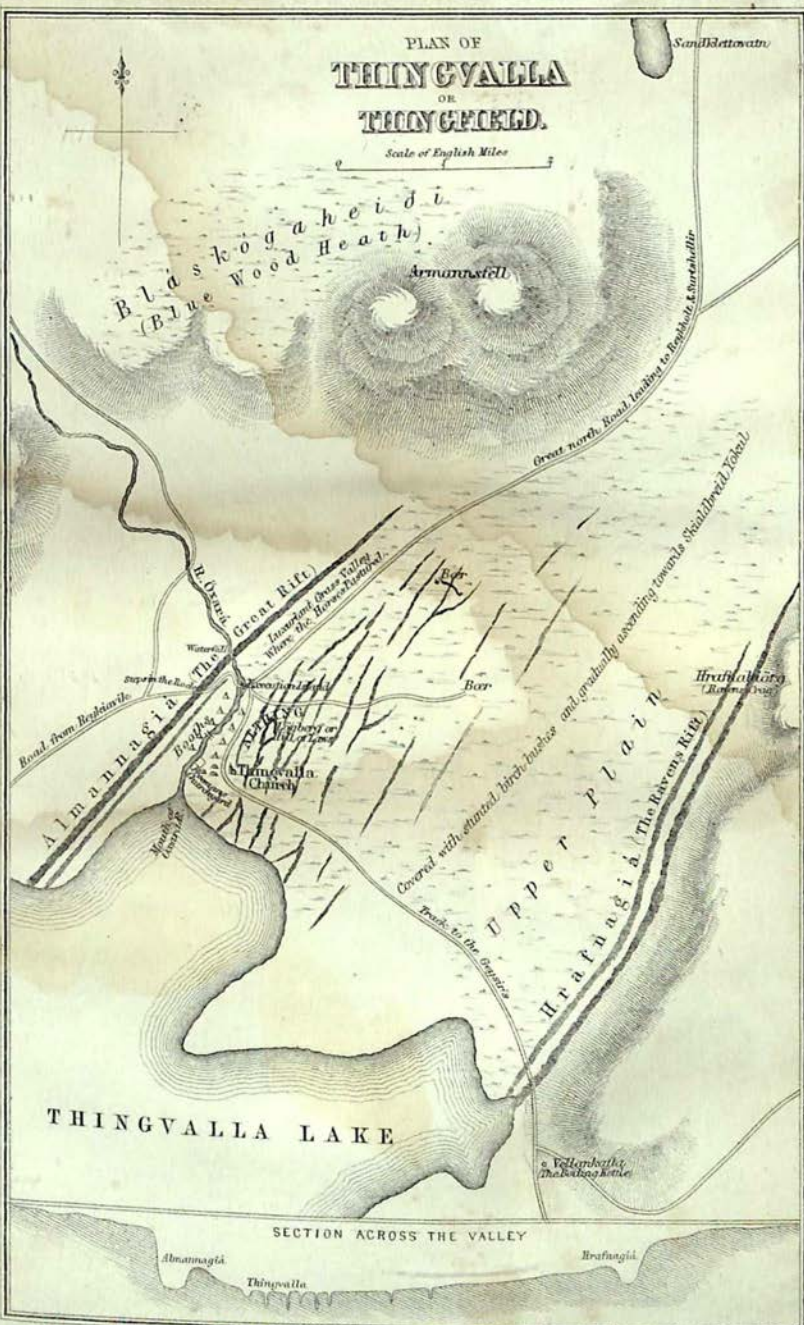
PUBLIC LIFE AND THE ALTHING.

With regard to what may be called their public life, the commonwealth had many claims on the freeman's time. Every freeman was naturally bound to be present at the local things, and even at the Althing. In a system of jurisprudence where so much was thrown upon the community, and the State as a body took so little on itself; where there were comparatively so few freemen, and where the system required so much evidence on oath, it would have been no easy matter for the priests to name men to serve as judges, or for plaintiffs and defendants to find neighbours to bear witness or to sit on the inquests in the Quarter Courts at the Althing, unless a great body of those fit to fulfil

brother-in-law,' says he, 'to bind hellshoon on the feet of men ere they are laid in the cairn'—for it was then said that they should fare to Hell when they were dead; and that is why we have a saying that that man is thought to be busking himself for Hell who clothes himself much, or is long in clothing himself when he goes out—'and now I will do this for Vestein,' says Thorgrim, 'and bind the hellshoon on his feet.' But when he had made an end of that work then Thorgrim spoke and said, 'I cannot bind on hellshoon at all if these loosen.'" Here the duty seems not to have been that of the next of kin, but of the priest, one of whom Thorgrim was.

such functions had attended it.* It was therefore considered a right and proper thing to ride to the Althing; if for no other reason than that of seeing the world. Besides law matters, much else was done there in the way of business between man and man. Pleasure was not excluded. There were feasts and biddings to feasts, and, as we know in Hrut's and Gunnar's cases, marriages might be made there, for a man went thither often with his wife and daughters. If we may judge from several passages in our Saga, it was usual with the great chiefs

* Those who failed to attend were liable to a fine, þingfararkaup, which went to the priest. He had also other dues, as temple rate or toll (hoftollr), fines from the goods of outlaws, tolls from foreign ships, succession dues and fines on the death or manslaughter of strangers who died without heirs in Iceland, and finally (sauðakvöð), certain dues in the way of sheep from the freemen of the district. But, on the other hand, the office of the goði, even supposing him to have drawn upon all these sources of income at once, was one that required considerable outlay. The temple was kept in repair at his cost, he supplied the victims for sacrifices, and prepared the feast in a worthy manner. This duty, in heathen times, before the Althing was established, and the þingfararkaup became a source of revenue, must have swallowed up most of the temple tolls. When the Althing came, the Thingmen of the goði rode thither and were maintained during their stay there in his booths and at his expense. In this way the fines for non-attendance must have been more than consumed. Well therefore might the old Christian law of Iceland say—"When a man has a priesthood, this is not to be reckoned as liable to tithe. It is power but not property."


PLAN OF
THINGVALLA
OR
THINGFIELD.
Scale of English Miles
Sandkiettavatn
Blaskogaheidi
(Blue Wood Heath)
Armannsfell
Great north Road leading to Reykholt & Surtshellir
Great Rift
The Great Rift)
Almannagia
Hrafnagia (The Ravens Rift)
Upper plain
Road from Reykjaville
Thingvalla
(Church)
Covered with stunted birch bushes and gradually ascending towards Skialdbreid Yokul
Track to the Geysers
THINGVALLA LAKE
SECTION ACROSS THE VALLEY
Almannagia
Thingvalla
Hrafnagia

to send on kinsmen or retainers to fit up their booths, which stood all along Axewater,* from the waterfall to the lake.

The Thingvalla or Thingfield itself, was a vast sheet of lava which at some unknown, but very early period, burst forth from the fells in the direction of Armann's fell, and taking a south-easterly direction flowed on till it met the Thingvalla Lake. When first formed it lay with a dip from north-east to south-west, that being the natural inclination of the soil which it covered. It must have been a mighty stream, for an arm, or rather the body of it, poured down the country on the western shore of the Thingvalla Lake for many miles. At some later period, all that portion of this stream with which we have more particularly to do, and which lay at the north end of

* See the origin of the name in Landnáma, V. 12, ed. 1843. Kettlebjörn the old, while looking about for a lot that suited him, came up from Ellidaros, near Reykjavik, to search the land. The first night he stopped at Skalabrekka. "But when they went thence they came to that stream which they called Axewater (Öxará), there they lost their axe; they stayed sometime under a fell-mull (that is, a bluff jutting out from the fell), which they called Reyðarmull (troutmull or charmull, the fish being so called from its bright red colour), and there they set their hearts upon the trout that they caught in the stream." If so, Kettlebjörn must have passed over the Thingfield, and passed on towards Reyðarmull and Reyðwater before he fell upon a lot that suited him in Laugardale and the Tongues.

the lake, dropped at once and subsided. The lava out of which it was formed was cavernous, an immense bubble inflated by gaseous vapours at the time of the eruption, which subsequently sank and collapsed either from its own weight or by the force of subterranean fire. When it subsided it still kept its old dip from north-east to south-west, so that the eastern side of the Thingvalla, "the upper plain," as it is called in our Saga, remained considerably higher than that on the west. The line of subsidence on either side was marked by two long chasms, or rifts, or furrows in the lava, the outer and higher edge or brink of each being at the original level of the whole stream as it first poured from the fell, while the inner and lower edge was formed as the lava bent and curled up, as it were, when it dropped. At the same time the whole surface of the brittle sunken field was split and cracked with countless lesser rifts, which were most numerous and most marked on its south-western slope. The rift or furrow on the eastern side was called the Raven's Rift or Geo (Hrafnagjá), that on the west, which was much more deeply furrowed and indented than the other, was called the Great Rift or Geo (Almannagjá). Of this last rift, both the lips or edges increase in height as they near the lake. The dip and subsidence having been evidently greatest at the south-western

angle of the field. About a mile and a half from where the Great Rift touches the Lake, its inner lip ceases, and just above this point a stream, Öxará (Axewater), leaps in a waterfall down from the outer lip of the Rift which still continues, runs for a short space parallel to it, then flows out into the Thingfield, and finds its way south to the Lake, cutting off a strip of the field between itself and the inner lip of the Rift. If it be asked why the stream does not follow the furrow of the Rift to the Lake, the answer is that as the bed of the furrow rises from the Lake, and as the lips lessen in height as they recede from it, the furrow, just south of the point at which the river falls down from its outer lip, is at a higher level than the bed of the stream, and much higher than that of the general level of the Thingfield, which is reached from the Rift by a sharp descent. The river therefore flows down towards the field in a rapid. Just where the stream turns into the plain below the point where the inner lip of the Rift ceases, it forms an island, or two or three islands, as the water happens to be high or low, mere shoals of lava sand which rise out of its shallow bed. A short quarter of a mile from the bed of Axewater, and to the south-east of the island at the turn, a rocky portion of the plain has been cut off by the junction of two of the lesser rifts or fissures which

have been mentioned, so as almost to form an island. This is the famous Hill of Laws, or Lögberg, of which we hear so much in our Story, and which was the heart of the Icelandic body politic. Here, on the highest peak of the rock, on the Lögberg properly so called, formal notices of trials, and proclamations on matters of public interest, were uttered by word of mouth, and here too, on the more level portion of it was the Court of Laws (Lögretta), the Supreme Court, and Deliberative Assembly or Parliament of the Commonwealth. The entrance to it was by a neck of land so narrow that three bold men might hold it against a host. The rifts that encircle it as with a moat are broad and deep. They are about sixteen feet wide in their narrowest point, across which Flosi, the leader of the Burners, is said by a tradition, which, though unconfirmed by our Saga, seems sufficiently trustworthy to mention, to have made a wild leap when the great battle arose at the Althing, after the suit for the Burning had been heard. The depth of the rifts all round are about nineteen fathoms, fifteen of which are filled with water, and the other four are sheer and ragged rock. Such were, and such are, the features of the Thingfield, a vast sunken plain of lava, about four miles broad, and rather more than four miles deep, lying with a dip or slope from

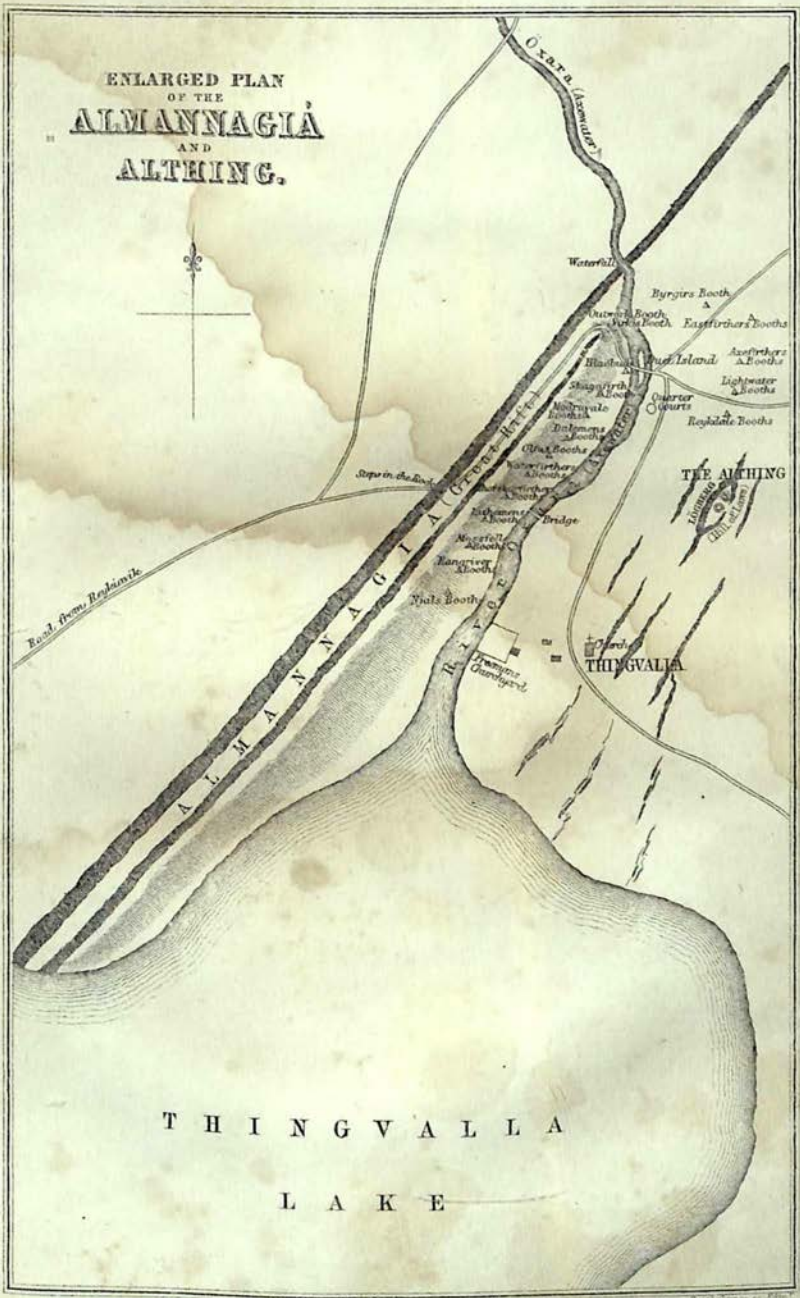
north-east to south-west, between two great rifts, or furrows, to the inner lips of which, east and west, the ground rises with a steep ascent. The Great Rift, on the west, is only accessible from the Thingfield by one steep path, leading to a single point just south of and above the bed of the river. On this western side, Axewater (Öxará), a stream of no great breadth or depth cuts off a narrow strip of the Thingfield, beyond which the inner lip of the Great Rift abruptly rises, increasing rapidly in height and steepness as it nears the lake. It was along the banks of this stream that the booths of the freemen and others who flocked to the Althing from the four Quarters of the land chiefly lay. Some way down the stream there was a bridge, in all likelihood not of stone, but such as that which still spans Brúará, Bridgewater, made of planks and baulks of timber, of which material, indeed, we know from Grágás,* that the bridges in Iceland were commonly made.†

* Grágás Greygoose, the venerable code of laws by which Iceland was governed in the time of the Commonwealth. The origin of the name seems doubtful. It came perhaps from the grey goose skin with which the Book of the Law was covered.

† That the bridge was some little way down the stream is plain, from Njála, ch. 144, vol. ii., p. 274, where Hall of the Side, and Ljot, when driven out of the battle, which began near the Hill of Laws, turn down east of Axewater. There Ljot waits at the foot

With regard to the position of the various booths, it seems certain that the chiefs and Thingmen from the same Quarter all established themselves on the same part of the Thingfield. So far as we can learn, the Eastfirthers, and the dwellers in the district more immediately round the Althing itself, were almost the only chiefs that had their booths east of Axewater. Thus Njal, and the men of Rangriver, are said to have pitched their booths on the west bank, close to the lake. Next to them were the Daledwellers (Dalverjar), that is, the men of the Dale priesthood, east of Markfleet; then

of the bridge while his father gathers force to part the two bands. When he comes back they cross the bridge, but by this time Flosi and his band had been driven down the west bank of the stream some way, and Ljot is slain as soon as ever he reaches the lava; that is, as soon as ever he crossed the turf that borders the bed of the stream and began to ascend the slope to the inner lip of the Great Rift. This is also shown from Hrafnkell Freysgoða Saga, p. 12, where Sam and old Thorbjorn, who, though Eastfirthers, had not pitched their booth together with those of the other Eastfirthers high up the stream near the waterfall, get up early one morning and go down to Axewater to wash themselves *below the bridge* (fyrir neðan brúna). Opposite to them, on the west of the stream, were the booths of the men from Thorskafirth, in the north-west. As it is expressly said that both Sam and Thorbjorn wished to pitch their booths "nowhere near those of the Eastfirthers," and as we know that the Eastfirthers were high up the stream, and that Sam to avoid them went to the bridge, we may infer that the bridge was well down the stream, even without the confirmation of this view afforded by our Saga.



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came the men of Mossfell and the Lithe; next the men from Borgarfirth; then the men from the West Firths—from Thorskafirth, opposite to the bridge, and Waterfirth. Then came the chiefs from the north, from Skagafirth and Eyjafirth; and then above them the chiefs from Hvammsfirth and the eastern shore of Broadfirth. In the Hladbooth, which seems to have stood close to the river bank, nearest to the turn at the island, Eyjolf Bolverk's son, Snorri's kinsman, had his booth; and above him, on the top of the steep rise leading to the Rift, just where the inner lip dies away, and so makes it possible to get into the furrow, was the Outwork-booth, Virkis booth, in which Snorri the priest had established himself at the Althing held after Njal's burning; here it was, on the rise, that he drew up his men, and hindered Flosi and the Burners from making their way into the Rift.

By this booth, which, no doubt, took its name from the strength of the position,* led the only path up to the Great Rift from the Thingfield; the ascent, as we have said, and as may be seen still better from our plans, is steep and rugged, rising sharply from the river. It was this path that Flosi, Bjarni, and Hallbjorn took with Eyjolf, whom they had just met at the Hladbooth down

* Virki "work," "fortified place," where the word is used in the sense in which it still is often heard in the last syllable of "earthwork."

below, when they led him up into the Great Rift before giving him the ring as a bribe to undertake their defence. When they came to the point at the top of the rise where the inner and lower lip of the Rift ends, they ordered their men to sit down there and keep watch, while they went on into the Rift till they reached the spot where the road then turned, as it still turns, up the side of the outer and upper lip of the Rift, and there it was, after they had scaled a portion of its height, that they made Eyjolf sit down between them, and first flattered, and then fairly bribed him with a massive gold ring, to take upon him the conduct of the cause which Bjarni had foreseen would end in the death of the mân who pleaded it.

Returning to the Thingfield, and descending the steep path which leads to the Thingfield, the way leads across the island, called in later times Execution Island, but which, in the days of which we write, was better known as the holm on which duels* were fought. It was to

* Hólmgang, pl. hólmgöngur, from "hólm" an island or holm, and "ganga" to go; islands were chosen because the laws of the duello in those days required that neither combatant should step without a given space. For the Code of Honour in Iceland see Kormak's Saga, ch. x. p. 86-8, where the whole law of duelling is laid down in the most punctilious way. Comp. also Gísli Súr's son's Saga, I. p. 6, and Egil's Saga, chap. lxvii. p. 159, ed. Reykjavík, 1856.

this island that Hrut challenged Mord, when the good lawyer, at the advice of his old friend Jorund the priest, refused to go. The scoffing which followed that refusal shows that public opinion had expected him to fall back on the customs of his forefathers, and put his trust in the God of Battles. It was to the same island that Hrut, in his turn, was challenged by Gunnar, and was told by his friends to follow Mord's example, and to refuse, because he was no more a match for Gunnar than Mord had been for him.

Crossing the river and standing on its eastern bank, we are about on the spot where the old Quarter Courts sat. It is plain, even from the term "going out" used of the judges, that those Courts did not sit on the Lögberg, but our Saga gives us a better proof of the fact, in the account of the suit after the Burning, when it says that Mord called upon his inquest to take their seats "west on the river bank," and when it tells us, shortly afterwards, that while Mord and Asgrim were summoning Flosi and Eyjolf to the Fifth Court, which we know sat on the Lögberg, on the site of the Court of Laws, Flosi and Eyjolf were losing their time at the Eastfirthers' Quarter Court, in trying to divide (vèfengja) the judges, and thus nonsuit the plaintiff.

On the western bank of the stream, in a line with

the waterfall, was Byrgir's booth, the farthest north, as Njal's is said to have been the farthest south, of all the booths. South of this booth, but on the eastern side of the water, were the booths of the men from Axefirth and Weaponfirth, and from all the Eastfirths in succession. As far as we can judge from the imperfect accounts which have come down to us, a portion of the Northlanders, such as the men from Lightwater, seem to have had their booths on this side the stream, along with the Eastfirthers, whom they backed in their quarrel, while another portion of them, headed by Gudmund the powerful, had their booths on the west of the stream, close to Snorri and the Westfirthers. It is possible that we may see in this split among the men of the north the results of that great feud between Gudmund and the men of Lightwater, in which that mighty chief for once was worsted, and had to bear the ill words spread abroad about him, to which Skarphedinn referred in his sharp reproof to Gudmund. Somewhere west of the river, and according to some, but very late accounts, in the midst of the Thingfield, between the two rifts, Skapti Thorod's sons' booth stood with one or two others; and in later times, when there were bishops in Iceland, the bishop's booth, the site of which is still pointed out, stood below the bridge, just above

the freeman's churchyard. This burial-place, which would not have been used for such a purpose in heathen times, when the custom seems to have been to bury a man close to where he died or fell, and throw a heap of stones or cairn over him of greater or less size, was probably, until the Change of Faith, a portion of the site, if not the site itself, of the local Thing, over which the Priest of the whole Host (Allsherjargoði) presided. The position of the Christian church close by, and the fact that it was the place where the fines awarded at the Althing seem to have been collected, would speak for this, even if we did not know that it was usual with the Christians to seize the sacred places and sanctuaries which the heathen used to frequent, and to baptise and hallow them to Christian purposes. However this may be, the site of the churchyard is well known, and, as such, we have marked it on our plan running down quite to the river bank.*

* The following description of the arrangement of the booths on the Althing was written in the year 1700, and printed in the Icelandic Periodical Thjódólfr of May 2d, 1851 :—

" Flosi's booth on the Althing was farthest to the north on the west side under the waterfall, but was nearly all broken down in 1700; but where the Court of Laws sat in 1700, was the booth of Thorgeir the Priest of Lightwater, who was the Speaker who brought Christianity into the law. The cleft of the cross, the height of which was that of King Olaf Tryggvi's son, that cleft is next on the north to

In modern times almost every traveller who visits the Thingfield approaches it from Reykjavik, and after

Snorri's booth, but the level space (hleðsla) which is there between them on the brink of the Rift, was in old time (áðr) the place of meeting for the Quarter Courts (fjórðúngsdóma); but on the rise on the south of Snorri's booth, as one makes for the Thingfield, was the booth of Eyjolf Bolverk's son; but where the Governor's booth now is, was in old time Gizur the white's booth, but that next on the north of it, now called Hedemann's booth, was of old Geir the priest's booth. Asgrim Ellidagrim's son's booth was up towards the rift, opposite to (mots við) the governor's booth. Egil Skallagrim's son's booth was between the booth of Geir the priest and the Rift, straight up. Hauskuld Dale-Kolli's son's booth was between the river and Geir the priest's booth. The booth of Hjallti Skeggi's son was north of the Court of Laws. Flosi had at first his booth east of the river, and a short way from Hall of the Side's booth, which was afterwards Ögmund's booth, west of the fences of the Thingvalla 'town.' The booth of Gudmund the powerful was near the river on the west side, by the way which comes down from Snorri's booth to the Court of Laws; his booth before was to the north? of the river, near to the old Hill of Laws, which was east of the river. Between the Rifts was also a bye-path, which led to the booth of Skapti the Lawman (Speaker of the Law), the son of Thorod, and also to the booths of Marcus Skeggi's son and Grim Sverting's son. Farthest of all south, along the river, opposite to Thingvallastede, was Njal's booth, near the river, to the south of Gizur the white's booth, and the booths of the men of Rangrivervale. Fiddle Mord's booth was out towards the hill above, and west of Gizur the white's booth. In the time of Thord and John the lawmen, the Court of Laws was brought from the south off the holm, and east of the old governor's booth, to the Court of Laws which now is (1700), and which was built of timber." Thord Gudmund's son, and John John's

riding for hours over barren and rugged tracts of moss-grown lava, suddenly reins up his galloway on the

son, were, the one lawman for the south and east Quarters, the other lawman for the north and west, between the years 1570-1605. See the list of Speakers of the Law, Safn til Sögu Ísl., II. 10. With regard to this description of the arrangement of the booths, it must be said that it rests entirely on late tradition, and is generally perplexing by comparing things of which we do know something with things of which we know nothing—things like Snorri's booth in 1000 with the Governor's booth in 1700. In some points the tradition of 1700 is directly at variance with our Saga. It is perhaps possible, though it is not very likely, that Byrgir's booth, where Flosi established himself, might have been west of the river under the waterfall, but we cannot see why at such a time he should have left the booths of his men from the east and his friends from the north and gone nearer to his foes. In this point, therefore, we think that if the tradition of 1700 refers to Byrgir's booth as west of the river, it is wrong. Whether Flosi, who lived many years after the Burning, went away with his booth west at some later period of his life, is another question. But most plainly wrong is the tradition of 1700 when it says that Thorgeir of Lightwater's booth was where the Court of Laws stood in 1700, that is, as it says farther on, west of the river, for our Saga most positively says that the booths of the men of Lightwater were east of the river. Again, when it says that Skapti Thorod's son's booth was east of the river, between the Rifts, this is also contradicted by our Saga, for it is plain in all the accounts of begging for help at the Althing that Skapti's booth was on the west side of the river, not far from the booths of the men from Mossfell, and from those of Möðruvale. In the battle at the Althing he probably left his booth and came up the west bank of the river, and so met the battle coming down as he was making for Snorri's booth. The tradition of 1700 may perhaps be right when

very brink of the upper lip of the Great Rift, and gazes upon the sunk field, stretching miles before him. By

it says that Gudmund the powerful changed his booth from east to west, for, as we have seen in the text, he might have been led to do so after being worsted by the men of Lightwater. In this our Saga agrees with the tradition of 1700, for on several occasions, in the beggings for help, it implies that Gudmund's booth was on the west bank; and in the account of the battle at the Althing, it says, in as many words, that the men of Möðruvale, of whom Gudmund was the mighty chief, were on that side of the stream. Whether the tradition is right in putting the Quarter Courts on the west side of the stream is great matter of doubt. It is true that, in the suit for the Burning, Mord calls on his inquest to take their seats "west on the river bank;" but the "west" seems here to mean west of the Court, which we believe sate on the east side of the stream. Had the Court sat west of the river, Mord would have used the words "east on the river bank," to imply that the inquest sat east of the Court. The tradition is probably right when it places Njal's booth furthest south of all; and when it places the men of Rang-river, Mossfell, and the Lithe on that side. We know from other sources, besides the tradition, that the men of the West Firths had their booths on the west bank; and our Saga agrees with the tradition, when it places Eyjolf Bolverk's son's booth, which it calls the Hladbooth, a name which perhaps means "Brinkbooth," below that of Snorri, on the river's brink. We know from Sturlúnga, II., p. 82, that this Hladbooth, whatever the name may mean, belonged to Snorri's family, of whom Eyjolf was one, for he was Snorri's cousin. The words of Sturlúnga are—"That summer Thord came early to the Thing and fitted up the Hladbooth, which went with, or belonged to, the priesthood or family of Snorri (Hlaðbúd er fylgði Snorrúnga goðorði). It seems to have come to the Sturlúngs by the marriage

that route the Westfirthers and Borgarfirthers, and some of the Northlanders from Skagafirth and Húnafirth sought the Althing in ancient times; but so far as our Saga is concerned, that route is only once or twice particularly mentioned; while on the other hand, as the chief actors in the Saga came from a district lying south-east of the Thingfield, almost all the wayfarers thither are described as reaching it by the eastern, or Raven's Rift lying opposite to the Great or Western Rift. Most of the Northlanders, all the Eastfirthers, as well as the men from the Dale east of Markfleet, the men from the Lithe, from Mossfell, and from the Rangriver vales, took paths which converged sooner or later till they all met in Laugardale, the site of the Geysers, and thence went on by one road to the Althing. The Eastfirthers going to the Althing after the Burning had to ride right through their enemy's country, and we know that they rode in force enough to turn slightly aside at Tongue, and to humble Asgrim's pride.

After this topographical description we may turn from the place itself to the main cause which drew this great

of Gils with Thordisa, the heiress of Guðlaugr, the last of the Straumfirthers, whose mother was Thorkatla, the granddaughter and heiress of Snorri the priest. See the Genealogy of the Sturlúngs in the Tables at the end of Landnáma, Kph. 1843.

gathering together year by year. The great business of the Althing, no doubt, was law. For law purposes it was established, and for law it was maintained. It is therefore time that we should enter a little into Icelandic law, or at least into so much of that vast body of jurisprudence which serves to illustrate our Saga. Our readers will bear in mind that the legal constitution of Iceland, at the time of which we write, consisted of a Court of Laws or High Court (Lögretta), which was the Deliberative Assembly. There it was that all changes in the existing law were brought forward and passed, but that the judicial power, the Courts of Law proper, were the four Quarter Courts Fjórðúngsdómr, each consisting of thirty-six judges named by the priests, in the way before described, and that the judges were bound to be unanimous, or else no judgment could be passed.

Let us now turn our attention to a trial before the Quarter Court. Every freeman in Iceland who felt himself aggrieved or injured in any of his rights, had three ways open to him to obtain redress. He might betake himself at once to the man who had done him wrong, either in word or deed, either by his own mouth or hand, or by those of others incited by him, and after laying the grievance before him, demand a fine compensation and atonement in the way of money (bót). In

this case the matter almost took the shape of a friendly arrangement, and the difference was soon arranged. Such were the dealings of Njal and Gunnar when the wives on either side were goading on their servants and kinsmen to manslaughter after manslaughter. Of this kind, too, was the compensation which Gunnar offered to Otkell for Hallgerda's stealing, Hauskuld's atonement to Thorarin for the death of Glum, Njal's sons' claim against Thrain for the wrongs which they had suffered for his sake in Norway, Njal's fine for the killing of Thrain, and many other like instances in our Saga. In such cases the injured side was looked upon as completely reconciled, and, indeed, the intimation that the friendship of the injuring would follow for the time to come the injured party, was often held out to induce the latter to show himself easy in his terms of atonement. Those terms were usually drawn up by some man of acknowledged worth and honesty, indifferent to either side, and then formally accepted by both. But it sometimes happened that one or other side claimed what was called selfdoom (sjalfdæmi), that is the right to make his own award. This was one of the choices which Gunnar offered to Otkell, and which he was silly enough to refuse; and it was what Gunnar got at last as his right, after the suit was set on foot. It was so great an honour, that

Njal advised him not to reject it, pointing out that the greater the matter at stake the greater was the honour in taking it.

But if the wrong-doer refused to make any compensation, there were still two ways left of dealing with him. 1st, The injured party might fall back on his right of private war, and take vengeance on him by following up the feud, and by killing him or some near member of his family. Indeed this way lay open to him from the very first; but in no state of society, however swift to shed blood, does war prevail over peace, or society itself could not continue to exist, and we have therefore put the friendly arrangement first. Or 2d, he might follow it up at law, and so make the private wrong a matter for the consideration of the State. Here in fact we see the old freeman waiving both his old natural rights—the right of property and the right of revenge—and appealing to the new organization of things which he had accepted on the establishment of a commonwealth. When Gizur the white and Geir the priest agree that the quarrel against Gunnar for Otkell's slaying shall be followed up at law, they were waiving those natural rights; and further on in the same quarrel, when Geir asks Gunnar if he is going to challenge him to the island, "and not bear

the law," he alludes to the same feeling.* With regard to the steps in such a trial, our Saga gives us every information. The Icelandic lawsuit was based on the evidence of the community, supported by oath. At every step solemn witness was taken, and to fail in producing such witness was to lose the suit. Many trials for manslaughter are recorded in Njal, but the one reported at fullest length is in the famous case of the suit set on foot after Njal's Burning. There we see how Mord rode to the spot where the deed was done and summoned nine neighbours who lived nearest to the spot† to serve on an inquest at the Althing. These neighbours at the trial formed what was called the Kvið or inquest, and upon their finding the guilt of the defendant depended. Those nearest to the spot were summoned, like our old English jurors *de vicinelo*, because they were supposed to be cognizant of all the facts, and to have seen the deed done, or at

* When Njal, ch. 69, vol. i., p. 222, says, "That is no breach of settlement that any man should take the law against another, for with law shall our land be built up and settled, and with lawlessness wasted and spoiled," he no doubt appeals to the good sense of the community, and points out the blessings derived from the substitution of judicial trials instead of wager of battle.

† Vættvangsbúar. The "vættvangr," or legal "spot," is laid down in Greygoose, II. 19, A. to extend a bowshot every way from the spot where the first assault was made.

least to have been the first to hear that it had been done. At the trial they heard no fresh evidence as to the fact. In fact, they brought the evidence with them, and were jurors and witnesses in one. In the presence of these men who, in cases when the suit was swiftly set on foot, saw the bodies of the slain, which were exhumed for the purpose, the plaintiff in the suit took solemn witness that he gave lawful notice of an assault against such and such a man, who fell on such and such a man and gave him a death wound. So technical was the Law in this respect, that it required the plaintiff to repeat this notice in almost the same words, putting the wounds first and the assault last, in order that it might be seen that the plaintiff was proceeding with all the solemnity and exactness which the law required. Next, the plaintiff again took witness, that he summoned those nine neighbours to ride to the Althing to sit on the inquest, to find whether the manslaughter had been committed in the way which he had said, and by the person whom he had named; and here again, the Law required that this summons should be repeated, the plaintiff again putting the wounds first and the assault last.

This was the first step in the trial, which was now said to be "*tilbúit,*" set on foot, or hanging over the heads of the accused. It took its rise, as it will be seen, from

the very bosom of the community, and originated entirely with the next of kin, or nearest representatives of the slain, and with his nearest neighbours, as serving on the inquest, and bearing evidence as witnesses. There was no State interference of any kind.*

When the time came for the meeting of the Althing, on the Thursday when ten summer weeks were passed,† all the parties to the suit, as well as all the witnesses, and the nine neighbours who were to form the inquest, were bound to ride to the Althing. There the next step in the suit was the solemn notice (lýsning) given from the Hill of Laws of the suit, and at the same time the plaintiff asked formally in what Quarter Court the suit lay, and in what district and in what house in the Quarter the defendant dwelt,‡ in order that the suit might be brought before the proper tribunal. This notice might be given on any day, so that it was fairly

* In cases of homicide no summoning of the manslayer was needed. He was bound to confess the deed as soon as it was committed, under pain of being held guilty of murder. In civil suits, or in those for petty crimes, as in Unna's suit against Hrut for her portion, or in that for Hallgerda's theft, the plaintiff had to summon the defendant at his own abode, a service often of no small danger.

† The Icelandic year was divided into two parts, summer and winter, each consisting of twenty-six weeks; the first summer day was the Thursday which fell between the 9th and 15th of April, old style.

‡ This was called at spyrja at þingfesti ok heimilisfangi.

early in the Thing, that the defendant might have due notice. After that, the matter rested till the next Friday, when the Althing was nine days old. On that day the judges went out to try causes.*

Now, before the court solemnly set, and girt round with hallowed cords (vèbönd) running from stake to stake, the real pleading of the suit began. At the same time, as we see from our Saga, a crowd of men stood round without the verge of the sacred ring, and expressed by a deep hum of praise, and sometimes even by loud shouts of applause, their sympathy with one side or the other, and their sense of the skill displayed in the conduct of the cause. No judge nor usher then interfered to stifle those outbursts of popular feeling, which were part of the Northman's free and open nature. Having settled by lot his right to begin with others who had like suits, the plaintiff took witness, and bade the defendant to listen to his oath. Then he took his oath, and called on the defendant to listen to the proceedings, and first to his oath, that he would plead the suit in the most fair and lawful way. Then he called his witnesses to the fact, that he had on the spot given notice of a suit for manslaughter against the defendant. Next those

* Ut fara is the term used; it implies that the courts proceeded from the Hill of Laws, or the Court of Laws, as a common centre.

witnesses came forward, and bore witness that the plaintiff had taken them to witness of the notice given on the spot, in both cases the plaintiff and witnesses repeating the form of words, that they might be caught tripping if their evidence did not agree. The plaintiff then took witness, and bade the nine neighbours who were to form the inquest, to take their seats west on the river bank, and called on the defendant to challenge the inquest (rýðja kviðin), if he had any lawful cause.

With this step the opening of the plaintiff's case or pleading ceased, and after taking witness that all the lawful steps and proofs had been brought in in due form, he left it to the defendant to challenge the inquest.

It was now the defendant's turn to try to find some flaw in the plaintiff's case thus reduced to legal form. He began by taking technical objections to the constitution of the inquest. In Njal's case the first objection raised was to two of the inquest on the score of relationship to the plaintiff. One, it seems, was his second cousin, and so likely to be partial. The other was his relation by baptism, which was reckoned a still more binding tie than cousinship. This demurrer would have been fatal to the suit had it not been met by the reply, which was ruled to be good at law, that these challenges must be made for kinship to the true plain-

tiff, the real next of kin, and not, as in the case before the Court, to one who was conducting the suit on his part. The defendant might also challenge any of the inquest for not being really householders, and did so in Njal's case, but this challenge was overruled, on the ground that lodgers and tenants might still sit on an inquest if they possessed a certain amount of property. The defendant might also challenge the inquest because they were not all of them actually the nearest neighbours to the spot where the deed was done, and the law was very jealous on this point. In Njal's case four had been thus wrongfully summoned, and the suit seemed to have broken down, when the dexterity of the plaintiff's adviser devised a lawful remedy, though the device showed an amount of legal knowledge which it was thought that few or none possessed, and which was only declared to be law by the opinion of the Speaker of the Law asked and given. According to his ruling, it was good law that five out of the nine men on the inquest could still utter their finding, though four had been challenged and set aside. The plaintiff was subject to a heavy fine for every man that he had summoned wrongfully, but that had nothing to do with the case before the Court. A bare majority of the nine might make a quorum, and the suit was still alive.

When the legal cunning of the defendant had exhausted all such challenges, and failed to find a flaw in the plaintiff's case, the plaintiff went on, and called on the inquest to utter their finding. This they proceeded to do, stating that they had been summoned by the plaintiff "to bear witness," and utter a finding whether such and such a man, naming the defendant, had assaulted, wounded, and slain such and such other man, naming him also by name. They had found their finding, and now uttered it for or against the said defendant, as the case might be. If for, the suit fell to the ground and came to naught; if against, they were bound to repeat their finding, uttering it first as to the wounds and last as to the assault, that the law might catch them tripping if it could. The plaintiff then went before the Court, and took witness that the inquest had uttered their finding against the defendant. He then summed up all the steps taken in the suit, and called on the other side to begin their defence, their efforts up to that time having been confined to finding flaws in the plaintiff's pleading, or in the summoning and constitution of the inquest. The defendant then began his defence in due form, which was conducted with the same amount of witness-bearing and oath-taking, and the same legal repetitions as marked the plaintiff's case. If he could succeed in

setting up a defence on the merits of the case, or a technical one on the jurisdiction or constitution of the court, he stopped the progress of the suit, and it fell to the ground. On technical grounds, the defendant in Njal's case forbade the judges to hear the suit by a protest made before a priest, "according to the common custom of the Althing and the law of the land." The protest was followed by a demand that the court should pass judgment for the defence. If he failed in securing the proper majority to override dissentients, he tried to split or divide the court (at vèfengja dóminn), and in that case also the case of the plaintiff who had failed to secure a majority on his side would lose his suit.

If, on the other hand, the defence failed, or none was set up in answer to the bidding of the plaintiff, one of the judges, whom we have called the foreman for want of a better name, and over whose head, or standing before whom, the plaintiff had pleaded his case, the witnesses borne their evidence, and the inquest uttered their finding, arose and summed up the whole proceedings, step by step.* After the summing up was over, the plaintiff took witness that he forbade the defendant to set up his defence, now that the case had been summed

* This was called at reifa málit, and the foreman was called reifingarmaðr. There were two of these foremen, one for the

up, and the foreman added this last step to his summing up. The plaintiff then took witness again, and prayed the court to pass judgment, in which six at least, and no more than thirty-six judges must agree.

The old Icelandic judges, in some of their functions, were like our jurymen, and like them, too, were bound to be unanimous. With an amount of common sense, however, which might well be imitated in some English jury cases, it was provided that if the minority who disagreed with the judgment of the majority were only one or two, they were bound, under a penalty of contempt of court, to side with the majority, but allowed to give reasons why they would have passed another sentence, if they could have had their way. In this way the maxim of another system of Jurisprudence, "*de minimis non curat lex*," was enforced in Iceland, the minority saved their conscience by a protest, and justice, according to the opinion of the majority, was done. No obstinate enduring juryman on the wrong side could, under that system, have forced eleven weak and fasting wretches to side with him in spite of right and justice.

plaintiff and another for the defendant. When judgment was at last given, if it were for the plaintiff, his foreman uttered the judgment in the name of the whole court, and the rest assented; if it were for the defendant, his foreman, who had summed up his defence, uttered the judgment of the court in his favour.

But if, on the other hand, there was what we should call a respectable minority, if six out of the thirty-six, that being the number requisite to form a quorum of the judges, or if more than six were on one side and six or more against them, this was such a marked difference of opinion on the Bench as to form what was called vèfang,* and the judges were said (at ganga til vèfangs) to go to a division. They parted into two bodies, and could pass no judgment, because all lawful judgments must be unanimous. The plaintiff, therefore, was non-suited, not from any fault of his own, because the court was divided in opinion. If this occurred in an under court at the Spring Thing or the Quarter Thing, the matter might be brought afresh before the Quarter Courts at the Althing, and then and there justice might be done; but what if it occurred at the Quarter Court itself? In that case the law was bankrupt, as Maurer says, and men had to look to their old remedy, the sword, if they wished to be righted. Along with the new system of law which had sprung up since

* Maurer, Isl. Staatsverfass. p. 186, agrees with the Glossary to the 4to edition of Grágás, in thinking that the word comes from the negative prefix "ve" and "fang," business, as though nothing further could be done in the suit. Cleasby's Dict., *sub voce*, on the other hand, derives it from "vè," halidom, and "fang" from "fengja," to lay hold, as though the judges, on dividing, laid hold of the hallowed ring, and made oath as to the step which they were about to take.

Ulfljot's days, there was, no doubt, much that shocked the free spirit of the people, who saw themselves shackled and trammelled by legal principles which they could not understand, but which, when applied, they felt were very grievous. It was no doubt a hardship for men whose forefathers were wont to settle such matters by strength of arm, trusting in Odin's help, to find that the help and cunning of man availed them so little that after pursuing suits from one court to another, and hoping vainly for justice, they were to be told the law could not help them, and that they had no legal remedy, because the judges could not agree. Besides this evil, which was inherent in the law itself, came the abuses of the law—the bribery, chicanery, and false swearing, which will ever follow in the train of law, so long as the heart of man is what it is. In fact, the law in Iceland, after having been in force about seventy years, no longer satisfied the people so far as trials were concerned, and the system which had been introduced to tame and regulate the old system of trial by wager of battle had broken down.*

In our sketch of a trial before the Quarter Court, at the Althing, we have purposely omitted one very important feature of these proceedings, only that we might

* It is curious to remark how the old right of battle underlies the whole system of the Law in heathen times. It seems to have

return to it, and impress it more forcibly on the reader's attention. This was the fact that both plaintiff and defendant might hand over the pleading or the defence to any other person whom they chose.* This was done in Njal's case, and in many other cases in our Saga, and the reason of it will be plain to every one who has taken the pains to follow the steps of the suit. It was no easy thing to plead the simplest suit in Icelandic Law, it required a good head and sound memory, and great skill in all the technicalities of the law, not merely to meet the questions and quibbles of the defence, but even to state one's own case step by step, taking oath after oath, and calling witness after witness, without making a false step. A man might have the best case in the world or the best defence, and yet fail for want of power to plead it, or to defend it. On such occasions, the services of what we should now call a counsel learned in the law, were absolutely necessary, and in our Saga we see that Flosi and the Burners

been an undoubted right that any man who could gather together sufficient strength might force his way to where the Court was sitting, and there break it up, and so stop its sentence. Compare Hrafnkell's case, further on.

* This was called "at handselia sök," or "at handselia vörn;" sometimes, as in Njála, p. 217, orig., or vol. ii. p. 210, transl., the expression "selia á hendr" is used.

having no such man among their friends and kinsmen were forced to obtain by a heavy fee the help of a great lawyer from the other end of Iceland. In short, the maxim of English lawyers, that he who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, was as well understood on the banks of Axewater as on those of the Thames, and thus the whole community were handed over to the power of these law-skilled men, of these counsel learned in the law, who employed, as we have seen, every quirk and quibble in pleading or defending the cause of their clients. It is no wonder then, that with the old right of wager of battle still existing in the back ground, we should find such men as Hrut challenging Mord, when legal chicanery is employed against him, or Gunnar Hrut when he is met by a legal quibble as to a flaw in summoning a witness. As society grew, and the Icelandic Commonwealth shot up, law grew and flourished with it, with its full crop of technicalities and special pleading; and as we have seen it would be easy for a man with the simplest case to be tripped up by the cunning of an adversary who was either a good lawyer himself, or had persuaded some law-skilled man like Mord Valgard's son to take up his suit. When to this is added the fact that even if a defendant failed in setting up a legal defence, he might

so perplex the minds of the judges as to divide the court in opinion, and render any judgment impossible, since a time-honoured principle of Northern Law required that all the judges should be unanimous; and that thus a plaintiff's suit, after all the pains he had taken to bring his witnesses and inquest to the spot, and to secure its safe conduct by handing it over to a good lawyer to plead, might still come to naught, because there was no higher court to which it could be carried.—When all this could happen, it was no wonder, we say again, that men should be disinclined to try their suits at law at all, but rather resolve to fall back to the old duel and seek their rights, as they told Njal, "by point and edge," or, as we should say in plain English, "by cut and thrust."

It was this public need we may be sure, and not that idle story told by the Saga-teller about Hauskuld Thrain's son's marriage, that induced Njal, the great lawyer, and the man of unstained honour and worth, to come forward with a remedy for an evil which he must have looked upon with alarm as a great stride backwards towards the old domain of barbarism. Law might have its evils, but it was at any rate better than lawlessness, which wastes a land and robs her of her best and bravest sons. "Let wise heads, therefore," said Njal, "meeting in

the Court of Laws"—in which, though no priest, he clearly had a seat—"devise a remedy for this great evil." When called on to state his views, he brought forward his famous project for the establishment of a Fifth Court, into which suits arising out of those very evils of which the freemen complained were to be tried.

First of all, the new court was to hear all matters of Contempt of the Thing,* such as the bearing of false witness or uttering a false finding; all wilful deviations from the path of public duty at the Althing, under which general head, any attempt to break up the Courts by force would be included; all bribery and corruption, either on the part of the briber and the bribed, for help in suits; and though last not least, all those suits in which the judges of the Quarter Courts were divided in opinion, and could arrive at no decision according to the old principles of the law.

The proceedings of the new court were to be

* þings afglöpun. In this way Eyjolf and Flosi are both summoned to the Fifth Court in our Saga, vol. ii. ch. 143, p. 261, first for bribery, and secondly for having brought false and irrelevant witness before the Court. The irrelevancy and chicanery consisted in the following points. In the first place, Flosi had no right to change his Quarter without leave had from the Court of Laws; secondly, public notice ought to have been given of the change of priesthood; and thirdly, the competency of the Court depended on the state of things at the time when the suit was set on foot, and therefore a change of priesthood at a later date was irrelevant, so far as that suit was concerned.

attended with the strongest and most binding oaths, and two vouchers were to follow every oath so taken by the parties, who were to back on their word of honour or on their oath the truth of what the others swore. The number of the judges was increased, and four twelves were to be named to sit as judges in the new court; but as the old principle of three twelves was still regarded as a thing too holy to touch, twelve of these were to be challenged and set aside, six by the plaintiff and six by the defendant, or the whole twelve by the plaintiff if the defendant, when called on, refused to exercise his right. In this way the great grievance of the commonwealth was cured by the erection of a Court of Appeal, as well as by a most important rule of the new tribunal, which provided that the judges were no longer to vote unanimously, but were allowed to divide and to decide by a majority. At the same time by making the new court the tribunal before which all cases of contempt of the Thing were to come, cases which were defined to be just that very bribery, corruption, chicanery, and false swearing, of which the common man complained, the excuse for resorting to the old system of point and edge was cut away, for no man could now say that it was impossible to get his rights except by the sword; and, as a matter of fact, we find duelling as a

legal remedy done away with by law almost immediately after the institution of the Fifth Court, while the old right of scattering the court by main force became one of those cases of contempt of the Thing of which the new tribunal was to take cognizance.

But as the number of witnesses, judges and freemen fitted to serve on the inquest, was already almost enough to exhaust the resources of the old priesthoods, it was resolved to erect new priesthoods, in order to find witnesses, judges, and inquests for the new court. One of these new priesthoods Hauskuld Njal's foster-child was chosen to fill, and this fact, no doubt, led to the story, told either by some one incapable of comprehending Njal's public spirit, or perhaps wilfully by some enemy to the new scheme, that Njal had devised the whole scheme merely as a means to get a priesthood and a good match for his foster-child.

We say an enemy, because the plan could not have been very grateful to the possessors of the old priesthoods, who now saw their monopoly invaded, and a large portion of their power transferred to rivals who would have the power of naming the judges in a court higher than any of their own. It also attacked them in their local districts at home, the real seat of their power, by making a reality of what was only before a shadow,

the right of every Thingman to leave his priest's Thing if he chose. Here was not only the principle asserted afresh, but a way shown and a means provided of making it earnest. No wonder then that the old priests, whose power, it must be remembered, had not long before received a terrible blow, aimed at its very heart, on the Change of Faith, were vexed at the innovation, and that stubborn heathens like Valgard the guileful were anxious to avenge the wrong which they had received on the author of the change, and on those nearest and dearest to him. It is probable too that the discontent amongst suitors, of which our Saga speaks, was much more serious than it would appear from the way in which it is told, and that the priests who filled the Court of Laws were terrified by popular clamour into yielding their assent so readily to Njal's scheme; but even he could not carry out his wishes to the full. The most radical alteration which he proposed at the same time, was contained in his proposal, that in the Court of Laws those only should have the right of voting who sat on the middle bench, but that those only should be chosen to sit on that bench who were wisest and best. This was the hardest blow ever aimed at the old system of influence exercised by the priests, and had it been fully carried out, their power as legislators

must have ceased to exist; but, by one of those dexterous turns which a governing body so well knows to give to a proposition for reform, part only of Njal's plan became law, while part was dropped. The right of voting was restricted to those who sat on the middle bench, but the "best and wisest" were not chosen to sit on it; the priests kept their right of sitting on that bench as before; and thus that half of Njal's proposition which was carried into effect only tended to strengthen still more the power of the ruling aristocracy.

But we have still something more to tell of an Icelandic trial. After judgment was given against the defendant, he was termed "sekr," "guilty" or "convicted," and the plaintiff then went on to make his adversary an outlaw, if the offence was such as to call down that punishment. This was done by formal notice at the Hill of Laws, but the sentence was not complete—he was not alsekr, not an out and out outlaw, so long as the Court of Execution, Fèránsdómr, had not been held. Such a court seems to have been held on all convicts, even in cases where the sentence only amounted to banishment from a particular district of the island; but in graver offences it depended on the result of that court of inquisition whether the convict was to be a

lesser outlaw, fjörbaugsmaðr, or a thorough outlaw, skógmaðr. If he had property enough to pay his debts, his wife's dower—supposing him to be married—the fines to which he had been sentenced, and the priest's fee, and bail,* if he could do all this, he had three places of asylum granted to him for three years, till he could get a passage to foreign parts, to fulfil the three years' exile which was the sentence of the Court in cases punishable by the lesser outlawry. No man could touch him on his way to or from those places of refuge, or to or from the ship; nor might any shipmaster refuse him a passage, under peril of falling into outlawry himself.† On his return after three years' absence he was a free man and restored to all his rights, but if he could not get a passage before three years were spent, he fell into thorough outlawry, and his life was at any man's mercy who could take it. So too, if at the Court of Execution he could not satisfy the claims above mentioned,

* Fjörbaug, literally "lifering," or fine; fjörbaugsmaðr, a man who had satisfied the law by paying such a fine to the priest; fjörbaugsgarðr, an enclosed space near a court, a "verge" or "liberty" within which a "fjörbaugsmaðr" was safe; which word, as it seems from several passages in Grágás and the Sagas, is also used for the lesser outlawry itself.

† The sole right of exemption from this public burden allowed by the law, was the plea that the shipmaster had already undertaken to give other outlaws a passage.

and especially, if he could not pay the priest's fine, he became at once a thorough outlaw (skógmaðr), and was forced to fly the haunts of men. This Court was to be held at the outlaw's own abode, within fourteen days after the last day of the Althing (eptir vápnatak), that is, after men took their arms, which they were supposed not to use during the peace which was proclaimed while the Thing lasted, and rode away home. But it was no easy thing to hold such a court at a great chief's house who, when outlawed, either in his presence or absence at the Althing, might gather such a band of followers around him as to set the plaintiff and the law at defiance. The law provided against this by giving the community an interest in half of the goods forfeited by the outlaw, the plaintiff being entitled to the other half, and the Priest of the district was bound to put the law in force by a formal process, in which all the technicalities of witnesses, oaths, and formularies, were again repeated. In cases where the outlaw was the Priest of the district itself, the plaintiff might obtain the help of some other Priest, and put the law in execution by main force. This was the case with the great chief of the east country, Hrafnkell Frey's Priest, who having been taken unawares at the Althing by an adversary, who had brought a charge of man-

slaughter against him, and outlawed before he could get to the court and scatter it with an armed band, rode off home, and hoped to set the law at defiance. It was a long ride to Hrafnkelstede in Jokulsdalewater in the east, but the plaintiff and his band, eighty in number, had just reached the spot on the morning of the last day left for execution. Having broken into the house, Hrafnkell being now again taken unawares, they seized him and his men in their beds, eight of them in all. Hrafnkell begged them to spare his men's life, and that he might not be treated with indignity, but they threw a rope from the main building to an outhouse, cut holes through the waistbands of their hose, passed the rope through the holes, and so strung them all up in a row, with their heads hanging down on one side of the rope and their heels on the other. Having treated Hrafnkell thus, whose crime was one which called down at once the highest sentence of the law, they proceeded to hold the Court of Execution in due form. This was called at heyja fèránsdóm. The court sat a bowshot off the dwellings of men, on some stony hill where there was neither cornfield nor mead (hvártki akr nè eng). It was to be held at noon, when the sun was due south. After this step had been taken, the outlawry was complete, and unless certain stipulations had been made concerning it,

as that the outlaw should go abroad for ever, or for a term of years, and keep his lands on his return, or unless at the Court of Execution he had brought in his fine to the priest, and his bail, which allowed him an asylum in certain places while he stayed in the country, he became a thorough outlaw, and his life was at the mercy of the plaintiff, or any other man of the community who could kill him. In the case of Hrafnkell the plaintiff Sam, who was a man of easy nature, gave Hrafnkell his life, after taking him down from the rope, on condition that he should give up all his property, a little of which only was restored to him, and then banished him the district.* This was quite against the advice of his friend the priest of Thorskafirth, Thorkell of the lock, who knowing the characters of both the men, foresaw that Hrafnkell would thrive wherever he was, but that Sam, the plaintiff, could not contend with him. His foresight was verified, for though Sam took Hrafnkell's priesthood from him, and his Thingmen joined him, Hrafnkell lost no time in setting up another priesthood close by, where he became shortly thriving and prosperous, and at last took ample revenge on Sam.

* In other words, Sam only made Hrafnkell "hèraðssekr," instead of taking his life as a "skógmaðr."

This execution and forfeiture, with the greater or lesser outlawry consequent on it, was the end of a trial for manslaughter, carried to its full length, but we think that these suits rarely went so far at the time of which we write. The tendency of the whole Icelandic legislation was not to put forth the full force of the law, but rather to make matters up. Even the banishment for three years was looked upon as a means of preventing bloodshed, by removing the hot-headed and overbearing, as well as those who, like Gunnar of Lithend, had fallen into quarrels for no fault of their own, for a while from the scene of strife. The Icelandic code took no pleasure in the death of a man, but rather aimed at saving his life for the good of the land. In a state of society where the great chiefs who had causes of their own to defend, or causes of their Thingmen to protect, rode thither with many men at their back, a private quarrel soon became that of a whole district. So long as the two appeals to law and battle stood open, the party which felt itself weak at law thought nothing of breaking up the court by force of arms, and in Hrafnkell's case it is expressly stated that he meant to teach these little men a lesson, who dared to strive at law with him, and called on his men to follow him, and break up the court, and drive

Sam from the suit.* From several suits in Njal, as well as from the fact of the battle at the Althing, after the suit for the Burning itself, we see that this was a danger always to be dreaded, and therefore it was natural that the more peaceably disposed, and less hot-headed chiefs, "the good men and true," as they are termed, like Njal, Hall of the Side, Hjallti, Snorri the priest, and others, should ever be on the watch to step in and make matters up, and stop a suit which might draw on a battle royal at any moment, or which, if carried out to the very letter of the law, might lead to local brawls in the attempt to put the sentence into execution. This no doubt was Snorri's feeling, when, as one of the daysmen or arbitrators, he told Gudmund the powerful that he was for awarding neither the greater nor the lesser outlawry. He would neither make Njal's sons fjörbaugsmenn, nor skógmenn, but inflict a fine which would settle the quarrel at once and for ever. This truth will come more fully home to the reader's mind, if he reflects, that in all the many lawsuits in Njal, not one was carried to its full length. They were all settled by the award of daysmen and arbitrators, who laid down such terms as they

* "Hafði hann þat í hug sèr at leiða smámönnum at sœkja mál á hendr hánum; ætlaði hann at hleypa upp dóminum fyrir Sámi ok hrekja hann af málinu." Hrafnkel's Saga Freysgoða Kph. 1847, p. 18.

thought would meet the justice of each particular case.

When such an award was uttered on any stage of the suit, the two sides were not thought fully atoned (allsáttir) until they had granted one another pledges of peace.* The formularies of these pledges are extremely interesting, and no doubt are some of the earliest documents of the kind in existence. The following is taken from one of the earliest Sagas,† and its original heathen character peeps out through the very slight Christian covering which has been thrown over it. This was the peace-telling that the worldly-wise Snorri got Thorgils, one of the greatest lawyers of the time, to utter in a quarrel.

"This is the beginning of our peace-telling, that as we are all atoned with God, so shall we be all men atoned and reconciled, the one to the other, at meat and at drink, at market and meeting, at church-door and in kingshall, and whatever place else men meet together. We shall be so agreed as though there had never been quarrel between us. We shall share knife and steak, and all things else between us, as friends and not foes. If

* "At veita grið ok trygðir;" the formulary itself was called "griðamál" or "trygðamál," and he who uttered it was said "at mæla fyrir griðum."

† Heiðarvíga Saga (Íslend. Sög. ii.), p. 379 foll.

strife arises henceforth between us, then fines shall be paid, but not blade reddened; but that man of our band who breaks the peace now made, and slays after pledges given, he shall be driven away as a wolf, and chased so far as men chase wolves farthest, or as Christian men seek churches, heathen men worship in shrines, fires burn, earth brings forth seed, maid calls 'mother,' ships skim the sea, shields shine, sunbeam melts snow, Finns glide on snowshoon, fir grows, hawk flies a summer day with a fair wind beneath both his wings, heaven bends over us, earth is peopled, winds rise, waters run into the sea, and men sow corn. He shall be banished from churches and Christian men, from God's house and soil, from every home save hell. Each of us takes pledges from the other, for himself and his heirs, born and unborn, begotten and unbegotten, named and unnamed; and each of us grants in his turn life-pledges and lasting pledges, meet pledges and mighty pledges, which shall ever be kept, so long as earth lasts and men live upon it. Now are we atoned and agreed, wherever we meet, on land or on lake, on ship or on skate, on sea or on steed—

> 'Partners of oars,
> And partners of pumps,
> On thwart and at thole,
> If help there be needed.'

Agreed on even terms one with another, as son with

father, or father with son, in all our dealings. Now shake hands on our peace-telling, and so let us keep well these pledges at Christ's will, and at the witness of all men who have now heard our pledgetelling. May he have God's love who keeps these pledges, and he God's wrath who breaks rightful pledges. We have been atoned with our whole hearts; and may God be atoned with all of us."

The man who broke such solemn pledges as these, was looked upon as a dastardly truce-breaker (griðníðingr), and was looked upon as for ever dishonoured and disgraced.*

* In this sketch of an Icelandic trial, and for the law in general, Arnesens Islandske Rættergang, Kbh. 1762, has been followed. But as much has been made clearer since Arnesens' day, his statements have been corrected and checked by Maurer's invaluable treatise, Die Entstehung des Isländischen Staats und seiner Verfassung, München, 1852. Over the history of the Fimtardóm or Fifth Court, in particular, Maurer's genius and research have thrown an entirely new light. The only point which he seems not to have proved is the existence of the Lögmaðr as a regular official in each priesthood, and bearing in some respects a co-ordinate authority with the priests themselves. So far as Iceland is concerned, the existence of such an official rests upon two passages, one in Hávarðar Saga Ísfirðings, ch. 1, p. 2. Kph. 1860. Comp. ch. 3, p. 8; the other in Svarfdæla Saga, ch. 10; in both of which it seems doubtful whether the term lögmaðr is not used rather of a man like Njál or Mord, skilled and learned in the law, to whom the neighbours betook themselves for advice, than technically of one filling a fixed and recognized office. It may be

THE ICELANDERS ABROAD.

If we follow these islanders abroad, we shall find that they were welcome wherever they went. In the courts and body-guards of kings and earls no man of mark amongst these Icelanders ever failed to prove his

mentioned, however, that Gísli Brynjulfsson in his very able essay, "Om Haavard og hans Viser," appended to the new edition of Havard's Saga, Kph. 1860, warmly expresses his agreement with Maurer on this point, and goes so far as to see in these lögmenn a class invested with an authority resembling that exercised by the Roman tribunes, and representing a principle in the Icelandic commonwealth antagonistic to the supremacy of the priests. He also assumes that these lögmenn were the foremen (reifingarmenn) on the bench of judges, and that they were little Mimers, in whose heads lay springs of legal knowledge and traditional law welling out for the good of the public, and he explains the expression in Njála, "over the head of John," vol. ii. p. 245, not as a standing name in the Icelandic formularies, answering to our M or N, but as referring to St. John's head, who had succeeded in Christian, to the part played by Mimer's head in heathen times. Whether this explanation be not more fanciful than true is open to discussion; but we must not omit to mention, that in the same passage Gísli Brynjulfsson has rightly pointed out that the "kviðr" or "inquest" must not be confounded with the English jury in its present shape. To that the Icelandic judges rather answered. The kviðr, on the other hand, is very nearly identical with the old English jury *de vicineto*, whose functions were rather to find the accused guilty on evidence which they themselves brought before the court, than to find him guilty after hearing the evidence of others. In our translation the difficulty has been avoided by rendering the word "kviðr" by "inquest,"

right to an honourable seat on one of the benches in the hall. Hrut, the good swordsman and foreseeing man, is soon received as one of King Harold Grayfell's henchmen; it is true he owed this honour to Gunnhilda's favour, but that patronage was thrust upon him by the passion of that wicked queen, and he would have won his way to the king's body-guard without her help. Gunnar is too proud to stand before Earl Hacon till he has won fame for himself, and goes eastward ho, and does many deeds of derring do before he returns to stand peerless amongst the champions of King Harold Gorm's son in Denmark, and afterwards to shine first and foremost among the followers of the wicked Earl. Njal's sons, Grim and Helgi, are taken by Kari to Earl Sigurd's court on the mainland of Orkney, and there do the earl good service by their foresight and strength of arm. When they left the Orkneys for Norway, we may feel sure that they would have been equally well received by Earl Hacon, had not Thrain's treachery to his liege lord in harbouring his outlaw Hrapp, thrown them into a quarrel which was none of their own seeking, and so spoilt their chance of honour at the court of Hladir.

a body which in early times had legal functions answering pretty much to those discharged by the Icelandic kviðr, and which in parochial and municipal matters still retains them in some parts of England at the present day.

Even the overbearing Hrapp was welcome as an Icelander in Gudbrand's hall, and had a seat of honour assigned him over against the high seat of the chief. Had he not betrayed his host, and dealt shamefully by his daughter, he would have been welcome so long as he chose to stay, not only in obedience to that general law of hospitality, to which he appealed, but much more for the amusement and information, which, as an Icelander, he was able to afford to the dwellers in that Norway dale. Lastly, when Flosi and the Burners fare abroad, and are thrown against their will upon the wild shore of Hrossey, as soon as the first burst of the Earl's anger has passed away, they are received into high favour, and Flosi fills the place in the body-guard which Helgi had held before. The gallant Kari had long been known in Orkney, his father Solmund, before he settled down on the Hruna-mennahrepp on the south-west of Iceland, had lingered in Orkney for a while after he left Norway, and thither Kari seems to have returned at an early age, and soon to have made his way to fame and fortune. He was clearly a stranger to Njal sons when they first met, and then filled the dangerous office of Earl Hacon's skatt-gatherer in those Western lands.* From these, and numberless other

* The following pretty story, translated by the writer, and published in the first number of "Once a Week," shows plainly the

instances, it is plain that the Icelanders were looked upon as the first and foremost of the Scandinavian race.

free and independent footing on which the Icelander, when abroad, stood with the princes of his time. It is a thoroughly genuine narrative, and occurs in the Saga of King Harold the stern, who fell at the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, and who showed more favour to Icelanders than any of the kings of Norway :—

" AUDUN AND HIS WHITE BEAR.

" There was a man named Audun, an Icelander and westfirther; his means were small, but his goodness was well known. This Audun once sailed from Iceland with a Norseman whose name was Thorir, but before he went he made over almost all his goods to his mother, and after all they were not more than enough to keep her for two years. After that they put to sea with a fair breeze, and soon made Norway. Audun stayed with Thorir that winter, and next summer they both sailed out to Greenland, and were there the next winter. There Audun bought a white bear well tamed, and he gave for the beast all the money he had—for it was the greatest treasure of a bear that had ever been heard of.

" Next summer they sailed back to Norway, and had a good voyage ; as for Thorir, the captain, he went back to his own house ; but Audun got himself a passage east to The Bay in the Cattegat, and took his bear with him, and looked about for a lodging while he stayed there, for he meant to make his way south to Denmark, and give the bear to King Sweyn. But just then the war and strife between King Harold and Sweyn was at its height. It happened, too, that Harold was then in the town whither Audun came, and he soon heard how an Icelander had come from Greenland with such a tame white bear ! The king sent at once for Audun, so he went before the king and greeted him. The king took his words well, and asked—

They combined in a wonderful degree, the dash, and daring, and genius of the Athenian, with the deliberate

" 'Hast thou that white bear which is such a treasure?'

" 'I have,' said Audun.

" The king said—'Wilt thou sell us the beast for the same price thou gavest for it?'

" 'I will not do that, lord,' said Audun.

" 'Wilt thou,' says the king, 'that I give thee twice as much, and that is fairer, if indeed thou gavest for it all thy money?'

" 'I will not do that, lord,' he said.

" 'Wilt thou give it me, then?' says the king.

" 'That, too, I will not do,' says the Icelander.

" 'What wilt thou do with it, then?' said the king.

" Audun answers, 'What I have already made up my mind to do; go south to Denmark, and give it to King Sweyn.'

" Then King Harold said, 'Is it now that thou art so ignorant a man that thou hast not heard of all this war and strife which is between the lands here, or dost thou think thy luck so great that thou wilt be able to bring this treasure to King Sweyn when others cannot get to his land without trouble, even when need forces them to go.'

" Audun answers, 'Lord, this now lies in your power, but I will say yes to no other way than the one I have already spoken of, and made up my mind to follow.'

" Then the king said: 'I see no reason why thou shouldst not go as thou pleasest, but I make this bargain that thou comest here to me when thou gettest back, and tellest me how King Sweyn rewarded thee for the beast. May be thou art a man of luck.'

" 'I'll give you my word to do that,' said Audun. And away he went, and got a passage south to Denmark. But when he got there every penny of his money was spent, and he had to beg for

valour and mother wit of the Spartan mind.* They were man by man, unit by unit, what their kinsmen

* The answer of Thorstein, Hall of the Side's son, when Kerthialfad asked him why he did not fly like the rest, but stopped to tie his shoe, was worthy of the best days of Sparta. "Because I am at home in Iceland, and I cannot get home to-night."

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food both for his bear and himself. So he went to a bailiff of the king, whose name was Auki, and begged him to get him some food, that he might feed himself and the bear, which he meant to give to King Sweyn.

"Auki answers: 'I will sell thee food, if thou wilt.'

"'I have nothing to give for it now,' said Audun; 'but I would be glad to hit upon some way of bringing the beast to the king, for it were great scathe if so precious a thing were to die on my hands.'

"Auki said: 'Ye'll both of you need much food before ye get to the king. And now I'll make thee this offer: I will feed ye both till then, but then I must have half the beast; and what thou hast now to look at is this—that thou wilt not have even half of it if it starves to death on thy hands.'

"Audun thought this choice hard, but still could see nothing better for it as things stood; so they struck a bargain, and he agreed to sell Auki half the bear, on condition that they started for where the king was at once, and should reckon the worth on both sides, first of the food which Auki gave him, and then of the beast; and that Auki should pay Audun so much as was over, if the king thought half the bear worth more than the food. So they went both of them till they found King Sweyn. He greeted Auki, the bailiff, well, but asked the man who came with him who he was, for he did not know him.

"Audun answers: 'I am a man from Iceland, new come from

in Normandy became afterwards as a nation,—bold as lions, but wary as foxes, tough as the ash, but pliant

Norway, but before that I came from Greenland. 'My errand hither was to give you this white bear, which I bought out there in Greenland with all my goods; but a great change has befallen me, for now I own no more than half the beast.'

"After that he told the king the whole story, and all that passed between him and Auki.

"Then the king said: 'Is this true, Auki, what he says?'

"'True it is,' says Auki.

"Then the king said: 'And thoughtest thou it fell to thee, when I had set thee over my goods and given thee great place, to tax and toll what an outlander and a stranger had undertaken to bring me as a treasure—who gave for it all his goods, and that too when our greatest foes thought it good to let him go on his way in peace? Think, now, how faithless it was in thee to do such a thing, and see what a great difference there is between thee and Harold, when he gave him safe conduct. And now it were meet thou shouldst lose, not only all thy goods, but thy life also; and though I will not slay thee this time, still thou shalt go away at once on the spot a beggar from my realm, and never come more unto my sight. But for thee, Icelander, as thou hast given me the whole of the beast, and that worth far more than the food which Auki sold, but which he ought to have given thee, I accept it, and ask thee to stay here with me.'

"Then Audun thanked the king for his words and invitation, and stayed there awhile, but Auki went away unhappy, and lost great goods because he coveted that which did not belong to him.

"Audun had only been with King Sweyn a little while when he said he was eager to go away. The king was rather slow in answering him.

as the bow; no feat was too daring for their courage to attempt, and no race in any time, whether ancient

" 'What wilt thou do, then?' he asked, 'if thou wilt not be with us?'

" 'I will go south to Rome,' he says.

" Then the king said:

" 'Hadst thou not taken such good counsel, I had been very angry at thy eagerness to go away, but now thou shalt not be thwarted in the least.'

" So the king gave him much silver, and settled all about his journey, and put him in the way of going in company with other pilgrims, and bade him to come to see him when he came back.

" So Audun went south; but when he was coming back he took a great sickness, and lay long a-bed. All the money was spent which Sweyn had given him, and his companions went on and left him. At last he rose from his sickness, and was quite thin and weak, nor had he a penny to buy food. Then he took a beggar's wandering, and went along begging his food, till he came back to Denmark about Easter, to a town where King Sweyn happened to be. By this time Audun had his hair close cropped, and scarce a rag to his back, vile and poor in every way; and so he dared not show himself among the throng of men. He hung about the cloisters of the church, and thought to choose his time to meet the king when he went to Nones; but when he saw the king coming and his train so bravely dressed, he was ashamed to show himself before their eyes. But when the king had sat down to the board, Audun went and took his meat outside under the wall of the hall, as is pilgrims' wont, so long as they have not thrown away staff and scrip. And now he made up his mind to throw himself in the king's way as he went to even-song; but, so bold as this seemed to him earlier in the day, just half as bold again must he have been to let the king see

or modern, has ever shown greater aptness in suiting themselves, at the shortest notice, to the peculiar cir-

him now that they had well drunk. So, when Audun saw them coming, he turned short off and ran away to hide himself. But the king thought he caught a glimpse of a man, and as he came out of church, and all his train had come inside their lodging, he turned round and went out again, and called out with a loud voice as soon as he was out of doors:—

"'If there be any man near here, as methinks there is, who wishes to see me, and has hardly heart to do so, let him come forward now and let himself be seen.'

"Then Audun came forward, and fell at the king's feet. The king knew him at once, and took him by the hand and bade him welcome.

"'And now,' he says, 'thou art greatly changed since we saw one another last, for I scarce knew thee!'

"So the king led him into the hall there and then; but all the king's train laughed at Audun as soon as they saw him. But the king said,—

"'Ye have no need to laugh at him, vile and mean though he seems to ye to look on; he hath seen better to his soul's health than ye, and therefore to God's eye he will seem bright and fair.'

"Then the king made them get ready a bath, and waited on him with his own hands, and gave him afterwards good clothes, and made much of him in every way. So Audun soon got back his strength and health, for he was young in years, and there he stayed awhile. He knew, too, how to behave himself among the crowd of men; he was an easy-tempered, word-weighing man, and not given to gossip. So all men liked him, and as for King Sweyn he was most gracious to him.

cumstances of every case. The Saxons were no hare-hearted folk, their arms were as stalwart and their thews

" So it fell out one day, when springtide was drawing on, that they two were talking together, and all at once the king said,—

" 'Sooth to say, Audun, I have never yet repaid thee in a way thou wouldest like by a gift in return for the white bear. And now, if thou wilt, thou shalt be free to stay long here with me, and I will make thee my henchman; and, at the same time, treat thee honourably in all things.'

" Audun answers, 'God thank you, lord, for your generous offer, and for all the honour you show me, but I have set my heart on sailing out to Iceland.'

" 'This seems to me a most wonderful choice,' said the king.

" Then Audun said, 'I can't bear to think that I am sitting here with you in great honour and happiness, while my mother tramps about on the beggar's path out yonder in Iceland; for now the time is up, during which I gave her means to live, before I sailed away from home.'

" 'Spoken like a good man and true,' answers the king, 'and no doubt thou wilt be a man of luck. This was the only thing which would not have misliked me, if thou hadst asked leave to go away. But now stay here awhile with me, till the ships are being got ready.'

" So Audun stayed. But, one day, when the spring was near at hand, King Sweyn went down from the town to the landing-place, and then they saw men busy fitting out their ships for various lands, —east to Russia, or to Saxony, to Sweden, or to Norway. So Audun and the king came to a fair ship, and men were hard at work on her: she was a merchantman of fine size.

" Then the king said, 'What thinkest thou, Audun, of this ship?'

" He said, 'She was fine enough.'

as strong as those of the men whom they met at Hastings, but their utmost efforts were powerless against the

" 'Now,' said the king, 'I will repay thee for the bear, and give thee this ship with a full lading of all that I know is handiest in Iceland.'

" Audun thanked the king, as well as he could, for this gift; but when time went on, and the ship was ready for sea, they two went down again to the strand, King Sweyn and Audun. Then the king spoke,—

" 'Since thou wilt go away from me, Icelander, nothing shall now be done to hinder thee; but I have heard tell that your land is ill off for havens, and that there are great shoals and risks for ships; and now, if things do not turn out well, it may be that thy ship goes to pieces, and thy lading will be lost; little then will be left to show that thou hast met King Sweyn, and given him a thing of great price.'

" As he said this, the king put into his hand a big leathern bag, full of silver, and said, 'Thou wilt not be now altogether penniless though thy ship goes to pieces, if thou only holdest this.'

" 'May be, too,' the king went on to say, 'that thou losest this money also, what good will it then have been to thee that thou gavest King Sweyn thy treasure?'

" As he said this, the king drew a ring of gold from his arm, and gave it to Audun; that was a thing of costly price, and the king went on—

" 'Though things go so ill, that thy ship goes to pieces, and all thy goods and money be lost, still thou wilt not be penniless, if thou comest to land with this ring, for it is often the wont of men to bear their gold about them, when they are in risk of shipwreck, and so it will be seen that thou hast met King Sweyn Wolfson, if thou holdest fast the ring, though thou losest the rest of thy goods. And now I will give thee this bit of advice, never to part with this

serried ranks and improved tactics of Duke William and his knights. The inert mass of Saxon nationality fell

ring, for I wish thee to enjoy it to the uttermost, unless thou thinkest thyself bound to repay so much goodness to some great man as to deem it right that thou shouldest give him a great treasure. When thou findest such an one give him the ring, for it is worth a great man's while to own it; and now farewell, and luck follow thy voyage.' That was what King Sweyn said.

"After that Audun put to sea, and ran into a haven in Norway, and as soon as he heard where King Harold was he set out to find him, as he had given his word. So Audun came before King Harold and greeted him, and the king took his greeting kindly.

"'Sit here now and drink with us,' said the king.

"So Audun sat and drank. Then King Harold asked, 'Well, how did King Sweyn repay thee for the white bear?'

"'In that wise, lord,' says Audun, 'that he took it when I gave it.'

"'In that wise I had repaid thee myself,' says the king. 'What more did he give thee?'

"'He gave me silver to go south on pilgrimage.'

"The king answers: 'King Sweyn has given many a man before now silver to go south on pilgrimage, or to help his need, though he had not brought him things of price. What hast thou more to say?'

"'He asked me,' answers Audun, 'to become his henchman, and to give me great honour if I stayed with him.'

"'That was well spoken,' says the king; 'but he must have repaid thee with more still.'

"Audun said: 'He gave me a big merchantman, full laden with the best of freight.'

never to rise again on that blood-stained field, while the banners of the Bastard's chivalry passed lightly over it from victory to victory, until they had made the whole land their own.

The few names which we have marked on our map of the Western Lands will show how thoroughly the Northman had made himself at home on British soil. The monks of Scilly in the far-west well knew, when they first sighted them in the offing, what the sails of

"'That was a noble gift,' says the king, 'but I would have given thee as much; or did he give thee anything more?'

"Audun answers: 'He gave me, besides, a leathern bag full of silver, and said I would not then be penniless if I held fast to it, though my ship went to pieces off Iceland.'

"'That was nobly thought of,' answers the king, 'and that I would not have done. I should have thought myself free if I had given thee ship and lading. Gave he aught besides?'

"'Yes, lord, he did,' says Audun; 'he gave me this ring which I have on my arm, and said it might so happen that I lost all my goods and the ship too, and yet he said I should not be penniless if I still had the ring. He bade me also not to part with the ring unless I thought that I owed so much to some great man for his goodness that I ought to give it him; but now I have found that man, for it was in your power, lord, to take my bear from me, and my life too, but you let me go in peace to Denmark when no one else could get thither.'

"The king took the ring blithely, and gave Audun good gifts in return before they parted. So Audun sailed to Iceland that very summer, and all thought him the luckiest of men."

a Viking fleet foreboded; but it was at Scilly that the greatest of all Vikings, Olaf Tryggvi's son, afterwards King Olaf of Norway, first learnt the Christian's creed, became converted at the teaching of those pious monks, and passed at once from the heathen sea-rover to the most zealous champion of the Cross. Ireland knew them, Bretland or Wales knew them, England knew them too well, and a great part of Scotland they had made their own. To this day the name of almost every island on the west coast of Scotland is either pure Norse, or Norse distorted so as to make it possible for Celtic lips to utter it. The groups of Orkney and Shetland are notoriously Norse, but Lewes and the Uists, and Skye and Mull are no less Norse; and not only the names of the islands themselves, but those of reefs and rocks and lakes and headlands* bear witness to the same relation, and show that, while the original inhabitants were not expelled, but held in bondage as thralls, the Northmen must have dwelt, and dwelt thickly upon them too, as conquerors and lords. The end of most conquests indeed is the same: time always asserts her sway, and the conquerors, a mere handful amongst the great mass of the population, after leavening it with the best particles of their nature, and infusing a new life into the com-

* Trotternish and Vatternish in Skye, for instance.

munity, take to themselves the features and language of the subject race; until after a separate existence, determined in its duration by the peculiar circumstances of each case, a new language and nationality are formed, in which the characteristics of the captives are predominant.

CONCLUSION.

And now, after having sketched the physical features of the island, pointed out its first discoverers, explained how it was that the Northmen settled on it, dwelt on their faith, their social principles, their method of settlement, their priesthoods, and petty kingdoms; having shown how they passed into a commonwealth, how they assumed a State and Provincial organization; having given an account of the great families which settled in the district to which our Saga more particularly belongs; having brought the chief characters on the stage, and given a rapid outline of the chronology and plot of the piece; having shown how the Icelander in the eleventh century was housed and lodged, how he spent his time, whether at home in his daily life, or year by year in the great gatherings on the Thingfield; having traced the topography of that interesting spot, the very heart of the Icelandic body politic, threaded the dark

labyrinths of Icelandic law, and then followed those bold Icelanders abroad to the courts of Kings and Earls ;— after all these proofs and proceedings have been brought in, to use the language of Mord at the trial for the Burning, nothing remains but to sum up the whole case, and to state a few of its broad features before calling on the public, that great inquest of the country, to utter their finding in Njal's favour, and to say that he is worthy of the pains which have been bestowed on his behalf. We are entitled to ask, then, in what work of any age are the characters so boldly, and yet so delicately drawn? Where shall we match the goodness and manliness of Gunnar, struggling with the storms of fate, and driven on by the wickedness of Hallgerda into quarrel after quarrel, which were none of his own seeking, but led no less surely to his own end? Where shall we match Hallgerda herself—that noble frame, so fair and tall, and yet with so foul a heart, the abode of all great crimes, and also the lurking place of tale-bearing and thieving? Where shall we find parallels to Skarphedin's hastiness and readiness; as axe aloft, he leapt twelve ells across Markfleet, and glided on to smite Thrain his death-blow on the slippery ice? where for Bergthora's love and tenderness for her husband, she who was given young to Njal, and could not

find it in her heart to part from him when the house blazed over their heads? where for Kari's dash and gallantry, the man who dealt his blows straightforward, even in the Earl's hall, and never thought twice about them? where for Njal himself, the man who never dipped his hands in blood, who could unravel all the knotty points of the law; who foresaw all that was coming, whether for good or ill, for friend or for foe; who knew what his own end would be, though quite powerless to avert it; and when it came, laid him down to his rest, and never uttered sound or groan, though the flames roared loud around him? Nor are the minor characters less carefully drawn, the scolding tongue of Thrain's first wife, the mischief-making Thiostolf with his pole-axe, which divorced Hallgerda's first husbands, Hrut's sword-manship, Asgrim's dignity, Gizur's good counsel, Snorri's common sense and shrewdness, Gudmund's grandeur, Thorgeir's thirst for fame, Kettle's kindliness, Ingialld's heartiness, and, though last not least, Bjorn's boastfulness, which his gudewife is ever ready to cry down—are all sketched with a few sharp strokes which leave their mark for once and for ever on the reader's mind. Strange! were it not that human nature is herself in every age, that such forbearance and forgiveness as is shown by Njal and Hauskuld and Hall, should have shot up out of that social

soil, so stained and steeped with the blood-shedding of revenge. Revenge was the great duty of Icelandic life, yet Njal is always ready to make up a quarrel, though he acknowledges the duty, when he refuses in his last moments to outlive his children, whom he feels himself unable to revenge. The last words of Hauskuld, when he was foully assassinated through the tale-bearing of Mord, were, "God help me and forgive you;" nor did the beauty of a Christian spirit ever shine out more brightly than in Hall, who, when his son Ljot, the flower of his flock, fell full of youth, and strength, and promise, in chancemedley at the battle on the Thingfield, at once for the sake of peace gave up the father's and the freeman's dearest rights, those of compensation and revenge, and allowed his son to fall unatoned in order that peace might be made. This struggle between the principle of an old system now turned to evil, and that of a new state of things which was still fresh and good, between heathendom as it sinks into superstition, and Christianity before it has had time to become superstitious, stands strongly forth in the latter part of the Saga; but as yet the new faith can only assert its forbearance and forgiveness in principle. It has not had time, except in some rare instances, to bring them into play in daily life. Even in heathen times such a deed as that

by which Njal met his death, to hem a man in within his house and then to burn it and him together, to choke a freeman, as Skarphedinn says, like a fox in his earth, was quite against the free and open nature of the race; and though instances of such foul deeds occur besides those two great cases of Blundkettle and Njal, still they were always looked upon as atrocious crimes and punished accordingly. No wonder, therefore, then that Flosi, after the Change of Faith, when he makes up his mind to fire Njal's house, declares the deed to be one for which they would have to answer heavily before God, "seeing that we are Christian men ourselves."

But it is at Clontarf, in Brian's battle, that the old and new faith met in the lists, face to face, for their last struggle. King Sigtrygg and his mother Kormlada, the woman who had all good gifts only to make every bad use of them, may or may not have been Christians, but their Christianity, if they confessed that faith, did not shrink from summoning to their aid against the good King Brian, the champion of Christianity, Brodir the Viking,* the apostate deacon, and the most stubborn heathen of his time. Earl Sigurd of Orkney was a

* It is plain that Brodir's real name is lost. He was Ospak's *brother*, and the Irish Annalists made the noun of relationship into a proper name. Comp. Maurer, Bekehrung des Norwegisch-

Christian in name, but we know from the account of his conversion, which is to be found in the Orkney Saga, how he only yielded to the preaching of King Olaf Tryggvi's son, when that zealous missionary monarch had him entirely in his power, and at last threatened to hew off his son's head before his eyes over the bulwarks of his ship. That Earl Sigurd was still a heathen at heart when he fared on the armada against King Brian, is clear from the fact, that he still had borne in the front of his battle array his famous raven banner, wrought by his mother with mighty spells, which was to bring victory to the host before whom it fluttered, but death to the man by whose hands it was borne.* Along

en Stammes I. 558, note, who hazards a conjecture that Brodir may be the Danish sea-king Gutring (Guðormr ?), mentioned by Thietmar of Merseburg, who died in 1018, as having been ordained a deacon, but who afterwards relapsed to heathendom.

* See the Story in the Orkney Saga, new edition, ch. 11, vol. i. p. 29. The Scottish Earl Finnleik had challenged Earl Sigurd to meet him in a pitched battle by a certain day. Earl Sigurd went to seek counsel of his mother, who was a wise woman, and told her the odds against him would not be less than seven to one. "His mother said, 'I had reared thee up long in my wool-bag had I known that thou wouldst like to live for ever, but know that fate rules life, and not the place whither a man goeth; better is it to die with honour than to live with shame. Take thou here hold of this banner, which I have made with all my art, and I ween it will bring victory to those before whom it is borne, but speedy death to him

with the great Orkney Earl came a great gathering of his chiefs and followers, called to the war from every island on the Scottish Main from Unst to Arran, beaten blades who had followed the descendant of Thorfinn the skull-splitter, in many a roving cruise,—half heathen half Christian men, who trusted perhaps to the sign of the cross on land, and to Thor's holy hammer on ship-board,—scarce knowing to what creed they belonged, but well knowing that it was the duty of a brave warrior and faithful henchman to follow his liege lord whenever he launched his galleys for a Viking voyage. Along with these island levies came, as we know, many Icelanders of the best blood in the land. Flosi would have gone himself, but the Earl would have none of his company, as he had his pilgrimage to Rome to fulfil, but fifteen of the Burners went to the fray, and Thorstein Hall of the Side's son, and Halldor, the son of Gudmund the powerful, and many other northern champions

who bears it.[1] The banner was made with mickle handcunning and famous skill. It was made in raven's shape, and when the wind blew out the banner, then it was as though the raven flapped his wings for flight." For Earl Sigurd's nominal conversion to Christianity, see ch. 12, vol. i. p. 31 foll. of the new edition of the Orkney Saga. For Ragnar Hairybreeks' standard of the like kind, see Asser, Gesta Aelfredi, p. 481. Comp. Maurer Die Bekehrung des N. S. I. 555.

of lesser note. On the side of King Brian* was arrayed the whole chivalry of Ireland, except those parts which owned the sway of Scandinavian conquerors. As leaders of that host came the aged King himself, the

* The good King Brian, afterwards known as Brian Boroimhe, or "of the Tribute," succeeded his brother Mahon as King of Munster in 976. After his accession he waged constant wars with the Northmen who, in the two preceding centuries, had overrun and settled in many parts of Ireland, their chief strongholds being the seaports of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Limerick, and Cork. Being able to hold his own against these formidable foes, whom, as the Irish Annals say, he defeated in more than forty battles, Brian reduced the petty kings and chiefs of his own race, forcing them to pay tribute, and to give him hostages. At length, in 1002, being then himself seventy-six, he deposed the Overking of Ireland, Malachi the Second, of the race of Hy-Niall, a dynasty which had held that dignity really or nominally for 600 years, since the days of their great ancestor, Njal of the Nine Hostages, so called because in the course of his conquests he had taken hostages from nine nations. He is said to have made St. Patrick prisoner in Gaul when a lad, and to have sold him as a slave in Ireland, whence he escaped to return as the Apostle of Ireland. This Njal is interesting to us, as the first Njal of whom tradition tells; the name was a common Irish one, and still exists in Neal, Neill, and the other forms of the word. Our Njal got it from some unknown connexion of his family with Ireland, just as Kormak and Kjartan, and many other Icelanders with Celtic names, got theirs. But to return to Brian,—having thus assumed the sovereignty of Ireland as Lord Paramount, Brian lived in great state and glory in his palace at Ceann Corradh, or Kincora, near Killaloe, in the county of Clare. The tribute from which he derived his title Boroimhe—unless he was so called, as

kindest hearted and most just of men, and his sons, own or adopted, Wolf the quarrelsome, and Kerthialfad,* and his new Christian convert Ospak Brodir's brother, who

O'Brien in his Dictionary thinks, from Borumha, a town close to Kincora—consisted of 300 cows with brass yokes; 300 steeds; 300 gold-hilted swords; and 300 purple cloaks, which were paid by the people of Leinster as a fine for having sided with the Northmen. He is also said to have forced the Northmen in Limerick to pay him 365 pipes of red wine, and those in Dublin 150 pipes. Out of Kincora, or Cean Corradh, as it is written in the Irish Annals, the Icelandic Saga writer has made in one MS. Kantaraborg, for Kankaraborg, and thus confounded Kincora with the English Canterbury, a town better known to Northmen. Another MS., which has been followed in our translation, reads Kunjattaborg, Connaught, but Brian ruled in Munster. See, for the life of Brian, "The Annals of Ireland;" Dublin, 1846, pp. 147-8, 220, 508-16, a work which contains a vast amount of information on ancient Ireland, collected from the Annals of the Four Masters, the Annals of Innisfail, and other sources. For the mistakes in the Icelandic MSS., see Munch Det Norske Folks Historie, ii. 644, who has gone through the Irish and Northern authorities for the Battle of Clontarf with great care. The account in our Saga was probably drawn from the accounts brought home by Thorstein Hall of the Side's son, who, as Munch well remarks, was uncle of Oddi Kol's son, who again, was the great authority of Ari the learned as to the history of the North. It was a family in which such stories as that of Brian's Battle were not likely to die out. Comp. Munch N. H., ii., 648.

* Munch, II. 646, supposes that this name is a distortion of the Celtic Tirdelvach; and he further supposes that this was the Christian name of the O'Kelly, king of Hy Maine, mentioned in the Annals of Innisfail as having been one of the leaders on Brian's side.

had quitted the impious rites of his heathen faith, and hastened to warn the venerable monarch of his danger on the very eve of the invasion. Nor were signs and portents wanting, before and after that bloody fight, to mark that more was at stake than the mere ascendancy of this or that line of kings. Clouds of the sky shed boiling blood, and birds of the air flocked to strange conflicts as the awful day approached; swords flew from their scabbards, and spears poised themselves in air, wielded by no earthly hands against the Viking band. King Sigtrygg's stronghold was the fort at Dublin, near the bridge, and thither by Palm Sunday the whole heathen host had met; but Brian, warned in time by Ospak, was not only ready to meet them should they fall upon him, but ready to march against and fall upon them. He too, on Palm Sunday, had gathered the Christian host in his leaguer at Clontarf, and so the two armies lay watching one another through Passion Week. Brodir, skilled in sorcery, betook himself to his black arts, and from the first got little comfort either for himself or his brothers in arms. If the battle were fought before Good Friday the heathen host would be utterly routed and lose its chiefs, but if the struggle were delayed till Good Friday, then King Brian would fall, but still win the day. On Good

Friday, then, which fell in 1014 on the 18th of April, the heathen made up their minds to fight; and that nothing might be wanting to stamp the struggle with the seal of the ancient faith, Odin himself, as the legend darkly hints, rode up, as we are told in many like stories, on an apple-gray horse, holding a halbert in his hand, and held a council of war with Kormlada, King Sigtrygg, and the other chiefs. One of the last appearances of the God of Battles struggling with the fate which now at last had overtaken him, and helping his own on the very eve of battle with his comfort and advice.* Nor were other tokens wanting. In Iceland itself, at Swinefell, where Flosi and the Burners had so long stayed, blood burst out on the Priest's vestments on Good Friday, and at Thvattwater, Hall's abode, on the same day, the Priest saw an abyss open hard by the altar as he sang mass, in which were strange and awful things. The northern mind plainly long looked on Brian's battle as a blow that went home

* Munch, N. H. ii. 645, thinks that it was one of Brian's discontented vassals who thus gave secret information to the foe, but the account given above is better suited to the mythical hue which is thrown over the battle in our Saga. The hour and the day, too. Thursday evening, the most witching time, according to northern belief, in all the week, speak for the supernatural character of the stranger.

to the heart of many a household. In Caithness, and in other parts of the west, the Valkyries, Odin's corse-choosing maidens, were seen, twelve of them riding together, dismounting, entering a bower, setting up their mystic loom, and there weaving out of the entrails of men, with swords for their shuttles, that grim Woof of War,* which is at once one of the last, as it is one of the grandest flights of the Scandinavian Swan-maiden, ere she wings her way for ever from the world, together with the faith to which she and that wild strain of melody belonged. The fight itself, and its issue, may be best read in the pages of our Saga, but we may note that the struggle of the two faiths is carried on throughout the day, until at last the champions of neither creed can claim a complete victory. The song of the Valkyries themselves, as well as the way in which they tear the weird woof asunder, and hasten half of them one way and half another, show that though their leaning was all for the young King Sigtrygg "of the silken beard," and though, according to the old faith, victory was foredoomed for him, yet that now, when struggling

* In Icelandic, "Vef Darraðar"—the name of Daurrud, the man in Caithness who is said to have seen the weaving—clearly arose out of a misunderstanding as to the meaning of the old word "Darraðr," which implies "war," or "the goddess of war." See Sveinbjörn Egilsson sub voce.

with a new and better belief, their spells and sooth-saying were powerless to win the day, and could only avail to make the battle drawn. Thus it is that Brodir, that stout champion on whose mail no sword would bite, is overthrown at the thrust of Kerthialfad's Christian spear; and felled, not once but thrice, loses all faith in his heathen harness, and flies like a felon to the wood, only to issue from it twice a felon, to take the life of the Christian king. Here, in its turn, heathen sorcery had spoken the truth, for Brian fell, but fell only after the victory was won. So too, with Sigurd's raven banner, one half, and the greater half, of its charm was broken, when it advanced against the array of warriors who trusted in a purer faith; it did not win the day for the host before whom it was borne, but the lesser half of its mystic nature asserted its sway, for it was the death of every man who bore it on that blood-stained field, until the turn came to the Earl himself, and he fell, thrust through with a spear, having wound the banner round his body. Almost ludicrous are the words of Rafn the red, who, though a Christian, had joined Earl Sigurd's host, but more wise than others of his followers, had refused to bear the Earl's devil, as he called his banner, bidding him bear it himself. We are told that this Rafn, as he fled from the

field, being in danger of drowning, and fancying he saw the fiends about to drag him down to the depths below, invoked St. Peter's aid, and made a vow that he, the Apostle's dog, would run a third time to Rome on a pilgrimage, if the saint would help him out of this strait. So strangely did the bright day-beams of the rising sun of Christianity shine through the dark clouds which overspread the heathen night, when every instant the victory of the new faith became more certain; but at the moment of which we write, the struggle between light and darkness was still raging throughout the North, just as it raged with doubtful issue on that memorable Good Friday throughout the great Battle of Clontarf. The age of miracles was then long past, and Providence then as now submitted to the trammels of time and space, and having both time enough and space enough, did everything surely, but nothing in a hurry; the Christian reader, therefore, must neither be surprised nor shocked to learn, as he will most assuredly learn if he reads this Saga aright, that the pure doctrines of Christianity were then merely the possession of a few, while the creed of the common herd was little more than a garbled blending of the most jarring tenets and wildest superstitions of both faiths.

One word and we must bring this introduction to

an end; it is merely to point out how calmly and peacefully the Saga ends, with the perfect reconciliation of Kari and Flosi, those generous foes, who throughout the bitter struggle in which they were engaged always treated each other with respect. It is a comfort to find, after the whole fitful story has been worked out, after passing from page to page, every one of which reeks with gore, to find that after all there were even in that bloodthirsty Iceland of the tenth century such things as peaceful old age and happy firesides, and that men like Flosi and Kari, who had both shed so much blood, one in a good and the other in a wicked cause, should after all die, Flosi on a trading voyage, an Icelandic Ulysses, in an unseaworthy ship, good enough, as he said, for an old and death-doomed man, Kari at home, well stricken in years, blest with a famous and numerous offspring, and a proud but loving wife.

ICELANDIC CHRONOLOGY.

A.D. 850. Birth of Harold fairhair.
860. Harold fairhair comes to the throne.
870. Harold fairhair sole King in Norway.
871. Ingolf sets out for Iceland.
872. Battle of Hafrsfirth (Hafrsfjörðr).
874. Ingolf and Leif go to settle in Iceland.
877. Kettle hæng goes to Iceland.
880-884. Harold fairhair roots out the Vikings in the west.
888. Fall of Thorstein the red in Scotland.
890-900. Rush of settlers from the British Isles to Iceland.
892. Aud the deeply wealthy comes to Iceland.
900-920. The third period of the Landnámstide.
920. Harold fairhair shares the kingdom with his sons.
923. Hrut Hauskuld's brother born.
929. Althing established.
930. Hrafn Kettle hæng's son Speaker of the Law.
930-935. Njal born.
930. The Fleetlithe feud begins.
933. Death of Harold fairhair.
940. End of the Fleetlithe feud; Fiddle Mord a man of rank; Hamond Gunnar's son marries Mord's sister Rannveiga.
941. Fall of King Eric Bloodaxe.
c. 945. Gunnar of Lithend born.
955-60. Njal's sons born.
959. Glum marries Hallgerda.
960. Fall of King Hacon, Athelstane's foster-child Harold Grayfell, King in Norway.

963. Hrut goes abroad.
965. Hrut returns to Iceland, and marries Unna Mord's daughter.
968. Unna parts from Hrut.
969. Fiddle Mord and Hrut strive at the Althing. Fall of King Harold Grayfell. Earl Hacon rules in Norway.
970-71. Fiddle Mord's death; Gunnar and Hrut strive at the Althing.
972. Gunnar of Lithend goes abroad.
974. Gunnar returns to Iceland.
974. Gunnar's marriage with Hallgerda.
975. The slaying of Swart.
976. The slaying of Kol.
977. The slaying of Atli.
978. The slaying of Brynjolf the unruly, and Thord Freedmanson.
979. The slaying of Sigmund the white.
983. Hallgerda steals from Otkell at Kirkby.
984. The suit for the theft settled at the Althing.
985. Otkell rides over Gunnar in the spring; fight at Rangriver just before the Althing; at the Althing Geir the priest and Gunnar strive; in the autumn Hauskuld Dale-Kolli's son, Gunnar's father-in-law, dies; birth of Hauskuld Thrain's son.
986. The fight at Knafahills, and death of Hjort Gunnar's brother.
987. The suit for those slain at Knafahills settled at the Althing.
988. Gunnar goes west to visit Olaf the peacock.
989. Slaying of Thorgeir Otkell's son before, and banishment of Gunnar at the Althing; Njal's sons Helgi and Grim, and Thrain Sigfus' son, go abroad.

990. Gunnar slain at Lithend.

992. Thrain returns to Iceland with Hrapp; Njal's sons ill treated by Earl Hacon for his sake.

994. Njal's sons return to Iceland, bringing Kari with them.

995. Death of Earl Hacon; Olaf Tryggvi's son King of Norway.

996. Skarphedinn slays Thrain.

997. Thangbrand sent by King Olaf to preach Christianity in Iceland.

998. Slaying of Arnor of Forswaterwood by Flosi's brothers at Skaptarfells Thing (Njal, II. p. 123); Thangbrand's missionary journey; Gizur and Hjallti go abroad.

999. Hjallti Skeggi's son found guilty of blasphemy against the Gods at the Althing; Thangbrand returns to Norway.

1000. Gizur and Hjallti return to Iceland; the Change of Faith, and Christianity brought into the law at the Althing on St. John's day, June 24th. Fall of King Olaf Tryggvi's son at Svoldr, Sept. 9th.

1001. Thorgeir the priest of Lightwater gives up the Speakership of the Law.

1002. Grim of Mossfell Speaker of the Law.

1003. Grim lays down the Speakership.

1003 or 1004. Skapti Thorod's son Speaker of the Law; the Fifth Court established; Hauskuld Thrain's son marries Hildigunna Flosi's niece, and has one of the new priesthoods at Whiteness.

1006. Duels abolished in legal matters; slaying of Hauskuld Njal's son by Lyting and his brothers.

1009. Amund the blind slays Lyting; Valgard the guileful comes back to Iceland; his evil counsel to

Mord; Mord begins to backbite and slander Hauskuld and Njal's sons to one another.

1111. Hauskuld the Whiteness priest slain early in the spring; suit for his manslaughter at the Althing; Njal's Burning the autumn after.

1112. The suit for the Burning, and battle at the Althing; Flosi and the Burners banished; Kari and Thorgeir Craggeir carry on the feud.

1113. Flosi goes abroad with the Burners, and Kari follows them; Flosi and Kari in Orkney.

1114. Brian's battle on Good Friday, Flosi goes to Rome.

1115. Flosi returns from Rome to Norway, and stays with Earl Eric, Earl Hacon's son.

1116. Flosi returns to Iceland; Kari goes to Rome, and returns to Caithness; his wife Helga dies out in Iceland.

1117. Kari returns to Iceland, is reconciled with Flosi, and marries Hildigunna Hauskuld's widow.

THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL.

CHAPTER I.

OF FIDDLE MORD.

THERE was a man named Mord whose surname was Fiddle; he was the son of Sigvat the Red, and he dwelt at the "Vale" in the Rangrivervales. He was a mighty chief, and a great taker up of suits, and so great a lawyer that no judgments were thought lawful unless he had a hand in them. He had an only daughter, named Unna. She was a fair, courteous, and gifted woman, and that was thought the best match in all the Rangrivervales.

Now the story turns westward to the Broadfirth dales, where, at Hauskuldstede, in Laxriverdale, dwelt a man named Hauskuld, who was Dalakoll's son, and his mother's name was Thorgerda.* He had a brother named Hrut,

* Thorgerda was daughter of Thorstein the Red, who was Olaf the White's son, Ingialld's son, Helgi's son. Ingialld's mother was Thora, daughter of Sigurd Snake-i'-the-eye, who was Ragnar Hairy-

who dwelt at Hrutstede; he was of the same mother as Hauskuld, but his father's name was Heriolf. Hrut was handsome, tall and strong, well skilled in arms, and mild of temper; he was one of the wisest of men—stern towards his foes, but a good counsellor on great matters. It happened once that Hauskuld bade his friends to a feast, and his brother Hrut was there, and sat next him. Hauskuld had a daughter named Hallgerda, who was playing on the floor with some other girls. She was fair of face and tall of growth, and her hair was as soft as silk; it was so long, too, that it came down to her waist. Hauskuld called out to her, "Come hither to me, daughter." So she went up to him, and he took her by the chin, and kissed her; and after that she went away.

Then Hauskuld said to Hrut, "What dost thou think of this maiden? Is she not fair?" Hrut held his peace. Hauskuld said the same thing to him a second time, and then Hrut answered, "Fair enough is this maid, and many will smart for it, but this I know not, whence thief's eyes have come into our race." Then Hauskuld was wroth, and for a time the brothers saw little of each other.

breek's son. Aud the Deeply-wealthy was Thorstein the Red's mother; she was daughter of Kettle Flatnose, who was Bjorn boun's son, Grim's son, Lord of Sogn, in Norway.

CHAPTER II.

HRUT WOOS UNNA.

It happened once that those brothers, Hauskuld and Hrut, rode to the Althing, and there was much people at it. Then Hauskuld said to Hrut, "One thing I wish, brother, and that is, that thou wouldst better thy lot and woo thyself a wife."

Hrut answered, "That has been long on my mind, though there always seemed to be two sides to the matter; but now I will do as thou wishest; whither shall we turn our eyes?"

Hauskuld answered, "Here now are many chiefs at the Thing, and there is plenty of choice, but I have already set my eyes on a spot where a match lies made to thy hand. The woman's name is Unna, and she is a daughter of Fiddle Mord one of the wisest of men. He is here at the Thing and his daughter too, and thou mayest see her if it pleases thee."

Now the next day, when men were going to the High Court, they saw some well-dressed women standing outside the booths of the men from the Rangrivervales Then Hauskuld said to Hrut—

"Yonder now is Unna, of whom I spoke; what thinkest thou of her?"

"Well," answered Hrut; "but yet I do not know whether we should get on well together."

After that they went to the High Court, where Fiddle Mord was laying down the law as was his wont, and after he had done he went home to his booth.

Then Hauskuld and Hrut rose, and went to Mord's booth. They went in and found Mord sitting in the innermost part of the booth, and they bade him "good day." He rose to meet them, and took Hauskuld by the hand and made him sit down by his side, and Hrut sat next to Hauskuld. So after they had talked much of this and that, at last Hauskuld said, "I have a bargain to speak to thee about; Hrut wishes to become thy son-in-law, and buy thy daughter, and I, for my part, will not be sparing in the matter."

Mord answered, "I know that thou art a great chief, but thy brother is unknown to me."

"He is a better man than I," answered Hauskuld.

"Thou wilt need to lay down a large sum with him, for she is heir to all I leave behind me," said Mord.

"There is no need," said Hauskuld, "to wait long before thou hearest what I give my word he shall have. He shall have Kamness and Hrutstede, up as far as

Thrandargil, and a trading-ship beside, now on her voyage."

Then said Hrut to Mord, "Bear in mind, now, husband, that my brother has praised me much more than I deserve for love's sake; but if after what thou hast heard, thou wilt make the match, I am willing to let thee lay down the terms thyself."

Mord answered, "I have thought over the terms; she shall have sixty hundreds down, and this sum shall be increased by a third more in thine house, but if ye two have heirs, ye shall go halves in the goods."

Then said Hrut, "I agree to these terms, and now let us take witness." After that they stood up and shook hands, and Mord betrothed his daughter Unna to Hrut, and the bridal feast was to be at Mord's house, half a month after Midsummer.

Now both sides ride home from the Thing, and Hauskuld and Hrut ride westward by Hallbjorn's beacon. Then Thiostolf, the son of Biorn Gullbera of Reykriverdale, rode to meet them, and told them how a ship had come out from Norway to the White River, and how aboard of her was Auzur Hrut's father's brother, and he wished Hrut to come to him as soon as ever he could. When Hrut heard this, he asked Hauskuld to go with him to the ship, so Hauskuld

went with his brother, and when they reached the ship, Hrut gave his kinsman Auzur a kind and hearty welcome. Auzur asked them into his booth to drink, so their horses were unsaddled, and they went in and drank, and while they were drinking, Hrut said to Auzur, "Now, kinsman, thou must ride west with me, and stay with me this winter."

"That cannot be, kinsman, for I have to tell thee the death of thy brother Eyvind, and he has left thee his heir at the Gula Thing, and now thy foes will seize thy heritage, unless thou comest to claim it."

"What 's to be done now, brother?" said Hrut to Hauskuld, "for this seems a hard matter, coming just as I have fixed my bridal day."

"Thou must ride south," said Hauskuld, "and see Mord, and ask him to change the bargain which ye two have made, and to let his daughter sit for thee three winters as thy betrothed, but I will ride home and bring down thy wares to the ship."

Then said Hrut, "My wish is that thou shouldest take meal and timber, and whatever else thou needest out of the lading." So Hrut had his horses brought out, and he rode south, while Hauskuld rode home west. Hrut came east to the Rangrivervales to Mord, and had a good welcome, and he told Mord all his business, and asked his advice what he should do.

"How much money is this heritage," asked Mord, and Hrut said it would come to a hundred marks, if he got it all.

"Well," said Mord, "that is much when set against what I shall leave behind me, and thou shalt go for it, if thou wilt."

After that they broke their bargain, and Unna was to sit waiting for Hrut three years as his betrothed. Now Hrut rides back to the ship, and stays by her during the summer, till she was ready to sail, and Hauskuld brought down all Hrut's wares and money to the ship, and Hrut placed all his other property in Hauskuld's hands to keep for him while he was away. Then Hauskuld rode home to his house, and a little while after they got a fair wind and sail away to sea. They were out three weeks, and the first land they made was Hern, near Bergen, and so sail eastward to the Bay.

CHAPTER III.

HRUT AND GUNNHILLDA, KING'S MOTHER.

At that time Harold Grayfell reigned in Norway; he was the son of Eric Bloodaxe, who was the son of Harold Fair-hair; his mother's name was Gunnhillda, a daughter of Auzur Toti, and they had their abode east, at the King's

Crag. Now the news was spread, how a ship had come thither east into the Bay, and as soon as Gunnhillda heard of it, she asked what men from Iceland were aboard, and they told her Hrut was the man's name, Auzur's brother's son. Then Gunnhillda said, "I see plainly that he means to claim his heritage, but there is a man named Soti, who has laid his hands on it."

After that she called her waiting-man, whose name was Augmund, and said—

"I am going to send thee to the Bay to find out Auzur and Hrut, and tell them that I ask them both to spend this winter with me. Say, too, that I will be their friend, and if Hrut will carry out my counsel, I will see after his suit, and anything else he takes in hand, and I will speak a good word, too, for him to the King."

After that he set off and found them; and as soon as they knew that he was Gunnhillda's servant, they gave him good welcome. He took them aside and told them his errand, and after that they talked over their plans by themselves. Then Auzur said to Hrut—

"Methinks, kinsman, here is little need for long talk, our plans are ready made for us; for I know Gunnhillda's temper; as soon as ever we say we will not go to her she will drive us out of the land, and take

all our goods by force; but if we go to her, then she will do us such honour as she has promised."

Augmund went home, and when he saw Gunnhillda, he told her how his errand had ended, and that they would come, and Gunnhillda said—

"It is only what was to be looked for; for Hrut is said to be a wise and well-bred man; and now do thou keep a sharp look out, and tell me as soon as ever they come to the town."

Hrut and Auzur went east to the King's Crag, and when they reached the town, their kinsmen and friends went out to meet and welcome them. They asked, whether the king were in the town, and they told them he was. After that they met Augmund, and he brought them a greeting from Gunnhillda, saying, that she could not ask them to her house before they had seen the king, lest men should say, "I make too much of them." Still she would do all she could for them, and she went on, "tell Hrut to be out-spoken before the king, and to ask to be made one of his body-guard;" "and here," said Augmund, "is a dress of honour which she sends to thee, Hrut, and in it thou must go in before the king." After that he went away.

The next day Hrut said—

"Let us go before the king."

"That may well be," answered Auzur.

So they went, twelve of them together, and all of them friends or kinsmen, and came into the hall where the king sat over his drink. Hrut went first and bade the king "good day," and the king, looking steadfastly at the man who was well-dressed, asked him his name. So he told his name.

"Art thou an Icelander?" said the king.

He answered, "Yes."

"What drove thee hither to seek us?"

Then Hrut answered—

"To see your state, lord; and, besides, because I have a great matter of inheritance here in the land, and I shall have need of your help, if I am to get my rights."

The king said—

"I have given my word that every man shall have lawful justice here in Norway; but hast thou any other errand in seeking me?"

"Lord!" said Hrut, "I wish you to let me live in your court, and become one of your men."

At this the king holds his peace, but Gunnhillda said—

"It seems to me as if this man offered you the greatest honour, for methinks if there were many such men in the body-guard, it would be well filled."

"Is he a wise man?" asked the king.

"He is both wise and willing," said she.

"Well," said the king, "methinks my mother wishes that thou shouldst have the rank for which thou askest, but for the sake of our honour and the custom of the land, come to me in half a month's time, and then thou shalt be made one of my body-guard. Meantime, my mother will take care of thee, but then come to me."

Then Gunnhillda said to Augmund —

"Follow them to my house, and treat them well."

So Augmund went out, and they went with him, and he brought them to a hall built of stone, which was hung with the most beautiful tapestry, and there too was Gunnhillda's highseat.

Then Augmund said to Hrut—

"Now will be proved the truth of all that I said to thee from Gunnhillda. Here is her highseat, and in it thou shalt sit, and this seat thou shalt hold, though she comes herself into the hall."

After that he made them good cheer, and they had sat down but a little while when Gunnhillda came in. Hrut wished to jump up and greet her.

"Keep thy seat!" she says, "and keep it too all the time thou art my guest."

Then she sat herself down by Hrut, and they fell to drink, and at even she said—

"Thou shalt be in the upper chamber with me to-night, and we two together."

"You shall have your way," he answers.

After that they went to sleep, and she locked the door inside. So they slept that night, and in the morning fell to drinking again. Thus they spent their life all that half-month, and Gunnhillda said to the men who were there—

"Ye shall lose nothing except your lives if you say to any one a word of how Hrut and I are going on."

[When the half-month was over] Hrut gave her a hundred ells of household woollen and twelve rough cloaks, and Gunnhillda thanked him for his gifts. Then Hrut thanked her and gave her a kiss and went away. She bade him "farewell." And next day he went before the king with thirty men after him and bade the king "good day." The king said—

"Now, Hrut, thou wilt wish me to carry out towards thee what I promised."

So Hrut was made one of the king's body-guard, and he asked, "Where shall I sit?"

"My mother shall settle that," said the king.

Then she got him a seat in the highest room, and he spent the winter with the king in much honour.

CHAPTER IV.

OF HRUT'S CRUISE.

WHEN the spring came he asked about Soti, and found out he had gone south to Denmark with the inheritance. Then Hrut went to Gunnhillda and tells her what Soti had been about. Gunnhillda said—

"I will give thee two long-ships, full manned, and along with them the bravest man, Wolf the Unwashed, our overseer of guests; but still go and see the king before thou settest off."

Hrut did so; and when he came before the king, then he told the king of Soti's doings, and how he had a mind to hold on after him.

The king said, "What strength has my mother handed over to thee?"

"Two long-ships and Wolf the Unwashed to lead the men," says Hrut.

"Well given," says the king. "Now I will give thee other two ships, and even then thou'lt need all the strength thou'st got."

After that he went down with Hrut to the ship, and said "fare thee well." Then Hrut sailed away south with his crews.

CHAPTER V.

ATLI ARNVID SON'S SLAYING.

THERE was a man named Atli, son of Arnvid, Earl of East Gothland. He had kept back the taxes from Hacon Athelstane's foster child, and both father and son had fled away from Jemtland to Gothland. After that, Atli held on with his followers out of the Mælar by Stock Sound, and so on towards Denmark, and now he lies out in Öresound.* He is an outlaw both of the Dane-King and of the Swede-King. Hrut held on south to the Sound, and when he came into it he saw a many ships in the Sound. Then Wolf said—

"What's best to be done now, Icelander?"

"Hold on our course," says Hrut, "'for nothing venture, nothing have.' My ship and Auzur's shall go first, but thou shalt lay thy ship where thou likest."

"Seldom have I had others as a shield before me," says Wolf, and lays his galley side by side with Hrut's ship; and so they hold on through the Sound. Now those who are in the Sound see that ships are coming up to them, and they tell Atli.

* Öresound, the gut between Denmark and Sweden, at the entrance of the Baltic, commonly called in English, The Sound.

He answered, "Then may be there'll be gain to be got."

After that men took their stand on board each ship; "but my ship," says Atli, "shall be in the midst of the fleet."

Meantime Hrut's ships ran on, and as soon as either side could hear the other's hail, Atli stood up and said—

"Ye fare unwarily. Saw ye not that war-ships were in the Sound. But what's the name of your chief?"

Hrut tells his name.

"Whose man art thou," says Atli.

"One of king Harold Grayfell's body-guard."

Atli said, "'Tis long since any love was lost between us, father and son, and your Norway kings."

"Worse luck for thee," says Hrut.

"Well," says Atli, "the upshot of our meeting will be, that thou shalt not be left alive to tell the tale;" and with that he caught up a spear and hurled it at Hrut's ship, and the man who stood before it got his death. After that the battle began, and they were slow in boarding Hrut's ship. Wolf, he went well forward, and with him it was now cut, now thrust. Atli's bowman's name was Asolf; he sprung up on Hrut's ship, and was four men's death before Hrut was ware of him; then he turned against him, and when they met, Asolf thrust at and

through Hrut's shield, but Hrut cut once at Asolf, and that was his death-blow. Wolf the Unwashed saw that stroke, and called out—

"Truth to say, Hrut, thou dealest big blows, but thou'st much to thank Gunnhillda for."

"Something tells me," says Hrut, "that thou speakest with a 'fey' mouth."

Now Atli sees a bare place for a weapon on Wolf, and shot a spear through him and now the battle grows hot: Atli leaps up on Hrut's ship, and clears it fast round about, and now Auzur turns to meet him, and thrust at him, but fell down full length on his back, for another man thrust at him. Now Hrut turns to meet Atli: he cut at once at Hrut's shield, and clove it all in two, from top to point; just then Atli got a blow on his hand from a stone, and down fell his sword. Hrut caught up the sword, and cut his foot from under him. After that he dealt him his death-blow. There they took much goods, and brought away with them two ships which were best, and stayed there only a little while. But meantime Soti and his crew had sailed past them, and he held on his course back to Norway, and made the land at Limgard's side. There Soti went on shore, and there he met Augmund, Gunnhillda's page; he knew him at once, and asks—

"How long meanest thou to be here?"

"Three nights," says Soti.

"Whither away, then?" says Augmund.

"West, to England," says Soti, "and never to come back again to Norway while Gunnhillda's rule is in Norway."

Augmund went away, and goes and finds Gunnhillda, for she was a little way off, at a feast, and Gudred, her son, with her. Augmund told Gunnhillda what Soti meant to do, and she begged Gudred to take his life. So Gudred set off at once, and came unawares on Soti, and made them lead him up the country, and hang him there. But the goods he took, and brought them to his mother, and she got men to carry them all down to the King's Crag, and after that she went thither herself.

Hrut came back towards autumn, and had gotten great store of goods. He went at once to the king, and had a hearty welcome. He begged them to take whatever they pleased of his goods, and the king took a third. Gunnhillda told Hrut how she had got hold of the inheritance, and had Soti slain. He thanked her, and gave her half of all he had.

CHAPTER VI.

HRUT SAILS OUT TO ICELAND.

HRUT stayed with the king that winter in good cheer, but when spring came he grew very silent. Gunnhillda finds that out, and said to him when they two were alone together—

"Art thou sick at heart?"

"So it is," said Hrut, "as the saying runs—'Ill goes it with those who are born on a barren land.'"

"Wilt thou to Iceland?" she asks.

"Yes," he answered.

"Hast thou a wife out there?" she asked; and he answers, "No."

"But I am sure that is true," she says; and so they ceased talking about the matter.

[Shortly after] Hrut went before the king and bade him "Good day;" and the king said, "What dost thou want now, Hrut?"

"I am come to ask, lord, that you give me leave to go to Iceland."

"Will thine honour be greater there than here?" asks the king.

"No, it will not," said Hrut; "but every one must win the work that is set before him."

"It is pulling a rope against a strong man," said Gunnhillda, "so give him leave to go as best suits him."

There was a bad harvest that year in the land, yet Gunnhillda gave Hrut as much meal as he chose to have; and now he busks him to sail out to Iceland, and Auzur with him; and when they were all-boun, Hrut went to find the king and Gunnhillda. She led him aside to talk alone, and said to him—

"Here is a gold ring which I will give thee;" and with that she clasped it round his wrist.

"Many good gifts have I had from thee," said Hrut.

Then she put her hands round his neck and kissed him, and said—

"If I have as much power over thee as I think, I lay this spell on thee that thou mayst never have any pleasure in living with that woman on whom thy heart is set in Iceland, but with other women thou mayst get on well enough, and now it is like to go well with neither of us;—but thou hast not believed what I have been saying."

Hrut laughed when he heard that, and went away; after that he came before the king and thanked him; and the king spoke kindly to him, and bade him

"farewell." Hrut went straight to his ship, and they had a fair wind all the way until they ran into Borgarfirth.

As soon as the ship was made fast to the land, Hrut rode west home, but Auzur stayed by the ship to unload her, and lay her up. Hrut rode straight to Hauskuldstede, and Hauskuld gave him a hearty welcome, and Hrut told him all about his travels. After that they send men east across the rivers to tell Fiddle Mord to make ready for the bridal feast; but the two brothers rode to the ship, and on the way Hauskuld told Hrut how his money-matters stood, and his goods had gained much since he was away. Then Hrut said—

"The reward is less worth than it ought to be, but I will give thee as much meal as thou needst for thy household next winter."

Then they drew the ship on land on rollers, and made her snug in her shed, but all the wares on board her they carried away into the Dales westward. Hrut stayed at home at Hrutstede till winter was six weeks off, and then the brothers made ready, and Auzur with them, to ride to Hrut's wedding. Sixty men ride with them, and they rode east till they came to Rangriver plains. There they found a crowd of guests, and the men took their seats on benches down the length of the hall,

but the women were seated on the cross benches on the dais, and the bride was rather downcast. So they drank out the feast and it went off well. Mord pays down his daughter's portion, and she rides west with her husband and his train. So they ride till they reach home. Hrut gave over everything into her hands inside the house, and all were pleased at that; but for all that she and Hrut did not pull well together as man and wife, and so things went on till spring, and when spring came Hrut had a journey to make to the Westfirths, to get in the money for which he had sold his wares; but before he set off his wife says to him—

"Dost thou mean to be back before men ride to the Thing?"

"Why dost thou ask?" said Hrut.

"I will ride to the Thing," she said, "to meet my father."

"So it shall be," said he, "and I will ride to the Thing along with thee."

"Well and good," she says.

After that Hrut rode from home west to the Firths, got in all his money, and laid it out anew, and rode home again. When he came home he busked him to ride to the Thing, and made all his neighbours ride with him. His brother Hauskuld rode among the rest. Then Hrut said to his wife—

"If thou hast as much mind now to go to the Thing as thou saidst a while ago, busk thyself and ride along with me."

She was not slow in getting herself ready, and then they all rode to the Thing. Unna went to her father's booth, and he gave her a hearty welcome, but she seemed somewhat heavy-hearted, and when he saw that he said to her—

"I have seen thee with a merrier face. Hast thou anything on thy mind?"

She began to weep, and answered nothing. Then he said to her again. "Why didst thou ride to the Thing, if thou wilt not tell me thy secret? Dost thou dislike living away there in the west?"

Then she answered him—

"I would give all I own in the world that I had never gone thither."

"Well!" said Mord, "I'll soon get to the bottom of this." Then he sends men to fetch Hauskuld and Hrut, and they came straightway; and when they came in to see Mord, he rose up to meet them and gave them a hearty welcome, and asked them to sit down. Then they talked a long time in a friendly way, and at last Mord said to Hauskuld—

"Why does my daughter think so ill of life in the west yonder?"

"Let her speak out," said Hrut, "if she has anything to lay to my charge."

But she brought no charge against him. Then Hrut made them ask his neighbours and household how he treated her, and all bore him good witness, saying that she did just as she pleased in the house.

Then Mord said, "Home thou shalt go, and be content with thy lot; for all the witness goes better for him than for thee."

After that Hrut rode home from the Thing, and his wife with him, and all went smoothly between them that summer; but when spring came it was the old story over again, and things grew worse and worse as the spring went on. Hrut had again a journey to make west to the Firths, and gave out that he would not ride to the Althing, but Unna his wife said little about it. So Hrut went away west to the Firths.

CHAPTER VII.

UNNA SEPARATES FROM HRUT.

Now the time for the Thing was coming on. Unna spoke to Sigmund Auzur's son, and asked if he would ride to the Thing with her; he said he could not ride if his kinsman Hrut set his face against it.

"Well!" says she, "I spoke to thee because I have better right to ask this from thee than from any one else."

He answered, "I will make a bargain with thee: thou must promise to ride back west with me, and to have no underhand dealings against Hrut or myself."

So she promised that, and then they rode to the Thing. Her father Mord was at the Thing, and was very glad to see her, and asked her to stay in his booth while the Thing lasted, and she did so.

"Now," said Mord, "what hast thou to tell me of thy mate, Hrut?"

Then she sung him a song, in which she praised Hrut's liberality, but said he was not master of himself. She herself was ashamed to speak out.

Mord was silent a short time, and then said—

"Thou hast now that on thy mind I see, daughter, which thou dost not wish that any one should know save myself, and thou wilt trust to me rather than any one else to help thee out of thy trouble."

Then they went aside to talk, to a place where none could overhear what they said; and then Mord said to his daughter—

"Now, tell me all that is between you two, and don't make more of the matter than it is worth."

"So it shall be," she answered, and sang two songs, in which she revealed the cause of their misunderstanding; and when Mord pressed her to speak out, she told him how she and Hrut could not live together, because he was spell-bound, and that she wished to leave him.

"Thou didst right to tell me all this," said Mord, "and now I will give thee a piece of advice, which will stand thee in good stead, if thou canst carry it out to the letter. First of all, thou must ride home from the Thing, and by that time thy husband will have come back, and will be glad to see thee; thou must be blithe and buxom to him, and he will think a good change has come over thee, and thou must show no signs of coldness or ill-temper, but when spring comes thou must sham sickness, and take to thy bed. Hrut will not lose time in guessing what thy sickness can be, nor will he scold thee at all, but he will rather beg every one to take all the care they can of thee. After that he will set off west to the Firths, and Sigmund with him, for he will have to flit all his goods home from the Firths west, and he will be away till the summer is far spent. But when men ride to the Thing, and after all have ridden from the Dales that mean to ride thither; then thou must rise from thy bed and summon men to go along with thee to the Thing; and when thou art all-boun, then shalt thou go to thy bed, and

the men with thee who are to bear thee company, and thou shalt take witness before thy husband's bed, and declare thyself separated from him by such a lawful separation as may hold good according to the judgment of the Great Thing, and the laws of the land; and at the man's door [the main door of the house,] thou shalt take the same witness. After that ride away, and ride over Laxriverdale Heath, and so on over Holtbeacon Heath; for they will look for thee by way of Hrutfirth. And so ride on till thou comest to me; then I will see after the matter. But into his hands thou shalt never come more."

Now she rides home from the Thing, and Hrut had come back before her, and made her hearty welcome. She answered him kindly, and was blithe and forbearing towards him. So they lived happily together that half-year; but when spring came she fell sick, and kept her bed. Hrut set off west to the Firths, and bade them tend her well before he went. Now, when the time for the Thing comes, she busked herself to ride away, and did in every way as had been laid down for her; and then she rides away to the Thing. The country folk looked for her, but could not find her. Mord made his daughter welcome, and asked her if she had followed his advice; and she says, "I have not broken one tittle of it."

Then she went to the Hill of Laws, and declared herself separated from Hrut; and men thought this strange news. Unnr went home with her father, and never went west from that day forward.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORD CLAIMS HIS GOODS FROM HRUT.

HRUT came home, and knit his brows when he heard his wife was gone, but yet kept his feelings well in hand, and stayed at home all that half-year, and spoke to no one on the matter. Next summer he rode to the Thing, with his brother Hauskuld, and they had a great following. But when he came to the Thing, he asked whether Fiddle Mord were at the Thing, and they told him he was; and all thought they would come to words at once about their matter, but it was not so. At last, one day when the brothers and others who were at the Thing went to the Hill of Laws, Mord took witness and declared that he had a money-suit against Hrut for his daughter's dower, and reckoned the amount at ninety hundreds in goods, calling on Hrut at the same time to pay and hand it over to him, and asking for a fine of three marks. He laid the suit in the Quarter Court, into

which it would come by law, and gave lawful notice, so that all who stood on the Hill of Laws might hear.

But when he had thus spoken, Hrut said—

"Thou hast undertaken this suit, which belongs to thy daughter, rather for the greed of gain and love of strife than in kindliness and manliness. But I shall have something to say against it; for the goods which belong to me are not yet in thy hands. Now, what I have to say is this, and I say it out, so that all who hear me on this hill may bear witness: I challenge thee to fight on the island; there on one side shall be laid all thy daughter's dower, and on the other I will lay down goods worth as much, and whoever wins the day shall have both dower and goods; but if thou wilt not fight with me, then thou shalt give up all claim to these goods."

Then Mord held his peace, and took counsel with his friends about going to fight on the island, and Jorund the priest gave him an answer.

"There is no need for thee to come to ask us for counsel in this matter, for thou knowest if thou fightest with Hrut thou wilt lose both life and goods. He has a good cause, and is besides mighty in himself and one of the boldest of men."

Then Mord spoke out, that he would not fight with

Hrut, and there arose a great shout and hooting on the hill, and Mord got the greatest shame by his suit.

After that men ride home from the Thing, and those brothers Hauskuld and Hrut ride west to Reykriverdale, and turned in as guests at Lund, where Thiostolf, Biorn Gullbera's son, then dwelt. There had been much rain that day, and men got wet, so long-fires were made down the length of the hall. Thiostolf, the master of the house, sat between Hauskuld and Hrut, and two boys, of whom Thiostolf had the rearing, were playing on the floor, and a girl was playing with them. They were great chatterboxes, for they were too young to know better. So one of them said—

"Now, I will be Mord, and summon thee to lose thy wife because thou hast not been a good husband to her."

Then the other answered—

"I will be Hrut, and I call on thee to give up all claim to thy goods, if thou darest not to fight with me."

This they said several times, and all the household burst out laughing. Then Hauskuld got wroth, and struck the boy who called himself Mord with a switch, and the blow fell on his face, and grazed the skin.

"Get out with thee," said Hauskuld to the boy, "and make no game of us;" but Hrut said, "Come hither to

me," and the boy did so. Then Hrut drew a ring from his finger and gave it to him, and said—

"Go away, and try no man's temper henceforth."

Then the boy went away saying—

"Thy manliness I will bear in mind all my life."

From this matter Hrut got great praise, and after that they went home; and that was the end of Mord's and Hrut's quarrel.

CHAPTER IX.

THORWALD GETS HALLGERDA TO WIFE.

Now, it must be told how Hallgerda, Hauskuld's daughter, grows up, and is the fairest of women to look on; she was tall of stature, too, and therefore she was called "Longcoat." She was fair-haired, and had so much of it that she could hide herself in it; but she was lavish and hard-hearted. Her foster-father's name was Thiostolf; he was a Southislander* by stock; he was a strong man, well skilled in arms, and had slain many men, and made no atonement in money for one of them. It was said, too, that his rearing had not bettered Hallgerda's temper.

* That is, he came from what we call the Western Isles or Hebrides. The old appellation still lingers in "Sodor (*i. e.* the South Isles) and Man."

There was a man named Thorwald; he was Oswif's son, and dwelt out on Middlefells strand, under the Fell. He was rich and well to do, and owned the islands called Bear-isles, which lie out in Broadfirth, whence he got meal and stock fish. This Thorwald was a strong and courteous man, though somewhat hasty in temper. Now, it fell out one day that Thorwald and his father were talking together of Thorwald's marrying, and where he had best look for a wife, and it soon came out that he thought there was n't a match fit for him far or near.

"Well," said Oswif, "wilt thou ask for Hallgerda Longcoat, Hauskuld's daughter."

"Yes! I will ask for her," said Thorwald.

"But that is not a match that will suit either of you," Oswif went on to say, "for she has a will of her own, and thou art stern-tempered and unyielding."

"For all that I will try my luck there," said Thorwald, "so it's no good trying to hinder me."

"Ay!" said Oswif, "and the risk is all thine own."

After that they set off on a wooing journey to Hauskuldstede, and had a hearty welcome. They were not long in telling Hauskuld their business, and began to woo; then Hauskuld answered—

"As for you, I know how you both stand in the

world, but for my own part I will use no guile towards you. My daughter has a hard temper, but as to her looks and breeding you can both see for yourselves."

"Lay down the terms of the match," answered Thorwald, "for I will not let her temper stand in the way of our bargain."

Then they talked over the terms of the bargain, and Hauskuld never asked his daughter what she thought of it, for his heart was set on giving her away, and so they came to an understanding as to the terms of the match. After that Thorwald betrothed himself to Hallgerda, and rode away home when the matter was settled.

CHAPTER X.

HALLGERDA'S WEDDING.

HAUSKULD told Hallgerda of the bargain he had made, and she said—

"Now that has been put to the proof which I have all along been afraid of, that thou lovest me not so much as thou art always saying, when thou hast not thought it worth while to tell me a word of all this matter. Besides, I do not think this match so good a one as thou hast always promised me."

So she went on, and let them know in every way that she thought she was thrown away.

Then Hauskuld said—

"I do not set so much store by thy pride as to let it stand in the way of my bargains; and my will, not thine, shall carry the day if we fall out on any point."

"The pride of all you kinsfolk is great," she said, "and so it is not wonderful if I have some of it."

With that she went away, and found her foster-father Thiostolf, and told him what was in store for her, and was very heavy-hearted. Then Thiostolf said—

"Be of good cheer, for thou wilt be married a second time, and then they will ask thee what thou thinkest of the match; for I will do in all things as thou wishest, except in what touches thy father or Hrut."

After that they spoke no more of the matter, and Hauskuld made ready the bridal feast, and rode off to ask men to it. So he came to Hrutstede and called Hrut out to speak with him. Hrut went out, and they began to talk, and Hauskuld told him the whole story of the bargain, and bade him to the feast, saying—

"I should be glad to know that thou dost not feel hurt though I did not tell thee when the bargain was being made."

"I should be better pleased," said Hrut, "to have

nothing at all to do with it; for this match will bring luck neither to him nor to her; but still I will come to the feast if thou thinkest it will add any honour to thee."

"Of course I think so," said Hauskuld, and rode off home.

Oswif and Thorwald also asked men to come, so that no fewer than one hundred guests were asked.

There was a man named Swan, who dwelt in Bear-firth, which lies north from Steingrimsfirth. This Swan was a great wizard, and he was Hallgerda's mother's brother. He was quarrelsome, and hard to deal with, but Hallgerda asked him to the feast, and sends Thiostolf to him; so he went, and it soon got to friendship between him and Swan.

Now men come to the feast, and Hallgerda sat upon the cross-bench, and she was a very merry bride. Thiostolf was always talking to her, though he sometimes found time to speak to Swan, and men thought their talking strange. The feast went off well, and Hauskuld paid down Hallgerda's portion with the greatest readiness. After he had done that, he said to Hrut—

"Shall I bring out any gifts beside?"

"The day will come," answered Hrut, "when thou wilt have to waste thy goods for Hallgerda's sake, so hold thy hand now."

CHAPTER XI.

THORWALD'S SLAYING.

THORWALD rode home from the bridal feast, and his wife with him, and Thiostolf, who rode by her horse's side, and still talked to her in a low voice. Oswif turned to his son and said—

"Art thou pleased with thy match? and how went it when ye talked together."

"Well," said he, "she showed all kindness to me. Thou mightst see that by the way she laughs at every word I say."

"I don't think her laughter so hearty as thou dost," answered Oswif, "but this will be put to the proof by and by."

So they ride on till they come home, and at night she took her seat by her husband's side, and made room for Thiostolf next herself on the inside. Thiostolf and Thorwald had little to do with each other, and few words were thrown away between them that winter, and so time went on. Hallgerda was prodigal and grasping, and there was nothing that any of their neighbours had that she must not have too, and all that she had, no matter whether it were her own or belonged to others

she wasted. But when the spring came there was a scarcity in the house, both of meal and stock fish, so Hallgerda went up to Thorwald and said—

"Thou must not be sitting in-doors any longer, for we want for the house both meal and fish."

"Well," said Thorwald, "I did not lay in less for the house this year than I laid in before, and then it used to last till summer."

"What care I," said Hallgerda, "if thou and thy father have made your money by starving yourselves."

Then Thorwald got angry and gave her a blow on the face and drew blood, and went away and called his men and ran the skiff down to the shore. Then six of them jumped into her and rowed out to the Bear-isles, and began to load her with meal and fish.

Meantime it is said that Hallgerda sat out of doors heavy at heart. Thiostolf went up to her and saw the wound on her face, and said—

"Who has been playing thee this sorry trick?"

"My husband Thorwald," she said, "and thou stoodst aloof, though thou wouldst not if thou hadst cared at all for me."

"Because I knew nothing about it," said Thiostolf, "but I will avenge it."

Then he went away down to the shore and ran out

a six-oared boat, and held in his hand a great axe that he had with a haft overlaid with iron. He steps into the boat and rows out to the Bear-isles, and when he got there all the men had rowed away but Thorwald and his followers, and he stayed by the skiff to load her, while they brought the goods down to him. So Thiostolf came up just then and jumped into the skiff, and began to load with him, and after a while he said—

"Thou canst do but little at this work, and that little thou dost badly."

"Thinkst thou thou canst do it better," said Thorwald.

"There's one thing to be done which I can do better than thou," said Thiostolf, and then he went on—

"The woman who is thy wife has made a bad match, and you shall not live much longer together.

Then Thorwald snatched up a fishing-knife that lay by him, and made a stab at Thiostolf; he had lifted his axe to his shoulder and dashed it down. It came on Thorwald's arm and crushed the wrist, but down fell the knife. Then Thiostolf lifted up his axe a second time and gave Thorwald a blow on the head, and he fell dead on the spot.

CHAPTER XII.

THIOSTOLF'S FLIGHT.

WHILE this was going on, Thorwald's men came down with their load, but Thiostolf was not slow in his plans. He hewed with both hands at the gunwale of the skiff and cut it down about two planks; then he leapt into his boat, but the dark blue sea poured into the skiff, and down she went with all her freight. Down too sank Thorwald's body, so that his men could not see what had been done to him, but they knew well enough that he was dead. Thiostolf rowed away up the firth, but they shouted after him wishing him ill luck. He made them no answer, but rowed on till he got home, and ran the boat up on the beach, and went up to the house with his axe, all bloody as it was, on his shoulder. Hallgerda stood out of doors, and said—

"Thine axe is bloody; what hast thou done?"

"I have done now what will cause thee to be wedded a second time."

"Thou tellest me then that Thorwald is dead," she said.

"So it is," said he, "and now look out for my safety."

"So I will," she said; "I will send thee north to Bear-

firth, to Swanshol, and Swan, my kinsman, will receive thee with open arms. He is so mighty a man that no one will seek thee thither."

So he saddled a horse that she had, and jumped on his back, and rode off north to Bearfirth, to Swanshol, and Swan received him with open arms, and said—

"That's what I call a man who does not stick at trifles! And now I promise thee if they seek thee here, they shall get nothing but the greatest shame."

Now, the story goes back to Hallgerda, and how she behaved. She called on Liot the black, her kinsman, to go with her, and bade him saddle their horses, for she said—"I will ride home to my father."

While he made ready for their journey, she went to her chests and unlocked them, and called all the men of her house about her, and gave each of them some gift; but they all grieved at her going. Now she rides home to her father; and he received her well, for as yet he had not heard the news. But Hrut said to Hallgerda—

"Why did not Thorwald come with thee?" and she answered—

"He is dead."

Then said Hauskuld—

"That was Thiostolf's doing."

"It was," she said.

"Ah!" said Hauskuld, "Hrut was not far wrong when he told me that this bargain would draw mickle misfortune after it. But there's no good in troubling one's self about a thing that's done and gone."

Now, the story must go back to Thorwald's mates, how there they are, and how they begged the loan of a boat to get to the mainland. So a boat was lent them at once, and they rowed up the firth to Reykianess, and found Oswif, and told him these tidings.

He said, "Ill luck is the end of ill redes, and now I see how it has all gone. Hallgerda must have sent Thiostolf to Bearfirth, but she herself must have ridden home to her father. Let us now gather folk and follow him up thither north." So they did that, and went about asking for help, and got together many men. And then they all rode off to Steingrims river, and so on to Liotriverdale and Selriverdale, till they came to Bearfirth.

Now Swan began to speak, and gasped much. "Now Oswif's fetches are seeking us out." Then up sprung Thiostolf, but Swan said, "Go thou out with me, there won't be need of much." So they went out both of them, and Swan took a goatskin and wrapped it about his own head, and said, "Become mist and fog, become fright and wonder mickle to all those who seek thee."

Now, it must be told how Oswif, his friends, and his

men are riding along the ridge; then came a great mist against them, and Oswif said, "This is Swan's doing; 't were well if nothing worse followed." A little after a mighty darkness came before their eyes, so that they could see nothing, and then they fell off their horses' backs, and lost their horses, and dropped their weapons, and went over head and ears into bogs, and some went astray into the wood, till they were on the brink of bodily harm. Then Oswif said, "If I could only find my horse and weapons, then I'd turn back;" and he had scarce spoken these words than they saw somewhat, and found their horses and weapons. Then many still egged the others on to look after the chase once more; and so they did, and at once the same wonders befell them, and so they fared thrice. Then Oswif said, "Though the course be not good, let us still turn back. Now, we will take counsel a second time, and what now pleases my mind best, is to go and find Hauskuld, and ask atonement for my son; for there's hope of honour where there's good store of it."

So they rode thence to the Broadfirth dales, and there is nothing to be told about them till they came to Hauskuld-stede, and Hrut was there before them. Oswif called out Hauskuld and Hrut, and they both went out and bade him good day. After that they began to talk. Hauskuld asked

Oswif whence he came. He said he had set out to search for Thiostolf, but couldn't find him. Hauskuld said he must have gone north to Swanshol, "and thither it is not every man's lot to go to find him."

"Well," says Oswif, "I am come hither for this, to ask atonement for my son from thee."

Hauskuld answered—"I did not slay thy son, nor did I plot his death; still it may be forgiven thee to look for atonement somewhere."

"Nose is next of kin, brother, to eyes," said Hrut, "and it is needful to stop all evil tongues, and to make him atonement for his son, and so mend thy daughter's state, for that will only be the case when this suit is dropped, and the less that is said about it the better it will be."

Hauskuld said—"Wilt thou undertake the award?"

"That I will," says Hrut, "nor will I shield thee at all in my award; for if the truth must be told thy daughter planned his death."

Then Hrut held his peace some little while, and afterwards he stood up, and said to Oswif—"Take now my hand in handsel as a token that thou lettest the suit drop."

So Oswif stood up and said—"This is not an atonement on equal terms when thy brother utters the award, but still thou (speaking to Hrut) hast behaved so well

about it that I trust thee thoroughly to make it. Then he stood up and took Hauskuld's hand, and came to an atonement in the matter, on the understanding that Hrut was to make up his mind and utter the award before Oswif went away. After that, Hrut made his award, and said—"For the slaying of Thorwald I award two hundred in silver"—that was then thought a good price for a man—"and thou shalt pay it down at once, brother, and pay it too with an open hand."

Hauskuld did so, and then Hrut said to Oswif—"I will give thee a good cloak which I brought with me from foreign lands."

He thanked him for his gift, and went home well pleased at the way in which things had gone.

After that Hauskuld and Hrut came to Oswif to share the goods, and they and Oswif came to a good agreement about that too, and they went home with their share of the goods, and Oswif is now out of our story. Hallgerda begged Hauskuld to let her come back home to him, and he gave her leave, and for a long time there was much talk about Thorwald's slaying. As for Hallgerda's goods they went on growing till they were worth a great sum.

CHAPTER XIII.

GLUM'S WOOING.

Now three brothers are named in the story. One was called Thorarin, the second Ragi, and the third Glum. They were the sons of Olof the Halt, and were men of much worth and of great wealth in goods. Thorarin's surname was Ragi's brother; he had the Speakership of the Law after Rafn Heing's son. He was a very wise man, and lived at Varmalek, and he and Glum kept house together. Glum had been long abroad; he was a tall, strong, handsome man. Ragi their brother was a great manslayer. Those brothers owned in the south Engey and Laugarness. One day the brothers Thorarin and Glum were talking together, and Thorarin asked Glum whether he meant to go abroad, as was his wont?

He answered—"I was rather thinking now of leaving off trading voyages."

"What hast thou then in thy mind? Wilt thou woo thee a wife?"

"That I will," says he, "if I could only get myself well matched."

Then Thorarin told off all the women who were

unwedded in Borgarfirth, and asked him if he would have any of these—"Say the word, and I will ride with thee!"

But Glum answered—"I will have none of these."

"Say then the name of her thou wishest to have," says Thorarin.

Glum answered—"If thou must know, her name is Hallgerda, and she is Hauskuld's daughter away west in the dales."

"Well," says Thorarin, "'tis not with thee as the saw says, 'be warned by another's woe;' for she was wedded to a man, and she plotted his death."

Glum said—"Maybe such ill-luck will not befall her a second time, and sure I am she will not plot my death. But now, if thou wilt show me any honour, ride along with me to woo her."

Thorarin said—"There's no good striving against it, for what must be is sure to happen." Glum often talked the matter over with Thorarin, but he put it off a long time. At last it came about that they gathered men together and rode off ten in company, west to the dales, and came to Hauskuldstede. Hauskuld gave them a hearty welcome, and they stayed there that night. But early next morning, Hauskuld sends for Hrut, and he came thither at once; and Hauskuld was out of doors

when he rode into the "town." Then Hauskuld told Hrut what men had come thither.

"What may it be they want," asked Hrut.

"As yet," says Hauskuld, "they have not let out to me that they have any business."

"Still," says Hrut, "their business must be with thee. They will ask the hand of thy daughter, Hallgerda. If they do, what answer wilt thou make?"

"What dost thou advise me to say?" says Hauskuld.

"Thou shalt answer well," says Hrut; "but still make a clean breast of all the good and all the ill thou knowest of the woman."

But while the brothers were talking thus, out came the guests. Hauskuld greeted them well, and Hrut bade both Thorarin and his brothers good morning. After that they all began to talk, and Thorarin said—

"I am come hither, Hauskuld, with my brother Glum on this errand, to ask for Hallgerda thy daughter, at the hand of my brother Glum. Thou must know that he is a man of worth."

"I know well," says Hauskuld, "that ye are both of you powerful and worthy men; but I must tell you right out, that I chose a husband for her before, and that turned out most unluckily for us."

Thorarin answered—"We will not let that stand in

the way of the bargain ; for one oath shall not become all oaths, and this may prove to be a good match, though that turned out ill ; besides Thiostolf had most hand in spoiling it."

Then Hrut spoke: "Now I will give you a bit of advice—this : if ye will not let all this that has already happened to Hallgerda stand in the way of the match, mind you do not let Thiostolf go south with her if the match comes off, and that he is never there longer than three nights at a time, unless Glum gives him leave, but fall an outlaw by Glum's hand without atonement if he stay there longer. Of course, it shall be in Glum's power to give him leave ; but he will not if he takes my advice. And now this match shall not be fulfilled, as the other was, without Hallgerda's knowledge. She shall now know the whole course of this bargain, and see Glum, and herself settle whether she will have him or not ; and then she will not be able to lay the blame on others if it does not turn out well. And all this shall be without craft or guile."

Then Thorarin said—"Now, as always, it will prove best if thy advice be taken."

Then they sent for Hallgerda, and she came thither, and two women with her. She had on a cloak of rich blue woof, and under it a scarlet kirtle, and a silver girdle

round her waist, but her hair came down on both sides of her bosom, and she had turned the locks up under her girdle. She sat down between Hrut and her father, and she greeted them all with kind words, and spoke well and boldly, and asked what was the news. After that she ceased speaking.

Then Glum said—"There has been some talk between thy father and my brother Thorarin and myself about a bargain. It was that I might get thee, Hallgerda, if it be thy will, as it is theirs; and now, if thou art a brave woman, thou wilt say right out whether the match is at all to thy mind; but if thou hast anything in thy heart against this bargain with us, then we will not say anything more about it."

Hallgerda said—"I know well that you are men of worth and might, ye brothers. I know too that now I shall be much better wedded than I was before; but what I want to know is, what you have said already about the match, and how far you have given your words in the matter. But so far as I now see of thee, I think I might love thee well if we can but hit it off as to temper."

So Glum himself told her all about the bargain, and left nothing out, and then he asked Hauskuld and Hrut whether he had repeated it right. Hauskuld said he had; and then Hallgerda said—"Ye have dealt so well

with me in this matter, my father and Hrut, that I will do what ye advise, and this bargain shall be struck as ye have settled it."

Then Hrut said—"Methinks it were best that Hauskuld and I should name witnesses, and that Hallgerda should betroth herself, if the Lawman thinks that right and lawful."

"Right and lawful it is," says Thorarin.

After that Hallgerda's goods were valued, and Glum was to lay down as much against them, and they were to go shares, half and half, in the whole. Then Glum bound himself to Hallgerda as his betrothed, and they rode away home south; but Hauskuld was to keep the wedding-feast at his house. And now all is quiet till men ride to the wedding.

CHAPTER XIV.

GLUM'S WEDDING.

THOSE brothers gathered together a great company, and they were all picked men. They rode west to the dales and came to Hauskuldstede, and there they found a great gathering to meet them. Hauskuld and Hrut, and their friends, filled one bench, and the bridegroom the other.

Hallgerda sat upon the cross bench on the dais, and behaved well. Thiostolf went about with his axe raised in air, and no one seemed to know that he was there, and so the wedding went off well. But when the feast was over, Hallgerda went away south with Glum and his brothers. So when they came south to Varmalek, Thorarin asked Hallgerda if she would undertake the housekeeping. "No, I will not," she said. Hallgerda kept her temper down that winter, and they liked her well enough. But when the spring came, the brothers talked about their property, and Thorarin said—"I will give up to you the house at Varmalek, for that is readiest to your hand, and I will go down south to Laugarness and live there, but Engey we will have both of us in common."

Glum was willing enough to do that. So Thorarin went down to the south of that district, and Glum and his wife stayed behind there, and lived in the house at Varmalek.

Now Hallgerda got a household about her; she was prodigal in giving, and grasping in getting. In the summer she gave birth to a girl. Glum asked her what name it was to have?

"She shall be called after my father's mother, and her name shall be Thorgerda," for she came down from Sigurd Fafnir's-bane on the father's side, according to the family pedigree.

So the maiden was sprinkled with water, and had this name given her, and there she grew up, and got like her mother in looks and feature. Glum and Hallgerda agreed well together, and so it went on for a while. About that time these tidings were heard from the north and Bearfirth, how Swan had rowed out to fish in the spring, and a great storm came down on him from the east, and how he was driven ashore at Fishless, and he and his men were there lost. But the fishermen who were at Kalback thought they saw Swan go into the fell at Kalbackshorn, and that he was greeted well; but some spoke against that story, and said there was nothing in it. But this all knew that he was never seen again either alive or dead. So when Hallgerda heard that, she thought she had a great loss in her mother's brother. Glum begged Thorarin to change lands with him, but he said he would not; "but," said he, "if I outlive you, I mean to have Varmalek to myself. When Glum told this to Hallgerda, she said, "Thorarin has indeed a right to expect this from us."

CHAPTER XV.

THIOSTOLF GOES TO GLUM'S HOUSE.

THIOSTOLF had beaten one of Hauskuld's house-carles, so he drove him away. He took his horse and weapons, and said to Hauskuld—

"Now, I will go away and never come back."

"All will be glad at that," says Hauskuld.

Thiostolf rode till he came to Varmalek, and there he got a hearty welcome from Hallgerda, and not a bad one from Glum. He told Hallgerda how her father had driven him away, and begged her to give him her help and countenance. She answered him by telling him she could say nothing about his staying there before she had seen Glum about it.

"Does it go well between you?" he says.

"Yes," she says, "our love runs smooth enough."

After that she went to speak to Glum, and threw her arms round his neck and said—

"Wilt thou grant me a boon which I wish to ask of thee?"

"Grant it I will," he says, "if it be right and seemly; but what is it thou wishest to ask?"

"Well," she said, "Thiostolf has been driven away

from the west, and what I want thee to do is to let him stay here; but I will not take it crossly if it is not to thy mind."

Glum said—"Now that thou behavest so well, I will grant thee thy boon; but I tell thee, if he takes to any ill he shall be sent off at once."

She goes then to Thiostolf and tells him, and he answered—

"Now, thou art still good, as I had hoped."

After that he was there, and kept himself down a little while, but then it was the old story, he seemed to spoil all the good he found; for he gave way to no one save to Hallgerda alone, but she never took his side in his brawls with others. Thorarin, Glum's brother, blamed him for letting him be there, and said ill luck would come of it, and all would happen as had happened before if he were there. Glum answered him well and kindly, but still kept on in his own way.

CHAPTER XVI.

GLUM'S SHEEP HUNT.

Now once on a time when autumn came, it happened that men had hard work to get their flocks home, and

many of Glum's wethers were missing. Then Glum said to Thiostolf—

"Go thou up on the fell with my house-carles and see if ye cannot find out anything about the sheep."

"'T is no business of mine," says Thiostolf, "to hunt up sheep, and this one thing is quite enough to hinder it. I won't walk in thy thralls' footsteps. But go thyself, and then I'll go with thee."

About this they had many words. The weather was good, and Hallgerda was sitting out of doors. Glum went up to her and said—

"Now Thiostolf and I have had a quarrel, and we shall not live much longer together." And so he told her all that they had been talking about.

Then Hallgerda spoke up for Thiostolf, and they had many words about him. At last Glum gave her a blow with his hand, and said—

"I will strive no longer with thee," and with that he went away.

Now she loved him much, and could not calm herself, but wept out loud. Thiostolf went up to her and said—

"This is sorry sport for thee, and so it must not be often again."

"Nay," she said, "but thou shalt not avenge this, nor meddle at all whatever passes between Glum and me."

He went off with a spiteful grin.

CHAPTER XVII.

GLUM'S SLAYING.

Now Glum called men to follow him, and Thiostolf got ready and went with them. So they went up South Reykiardale and then up along by Baugagil and so south to Crossfell. But some of his band he sent to the Sulafells, and they all found very many sheep. Some of them, too, went by way of Scoradale, and it came about at last that those twain, Glum and Thiostolf, were left alone together. They went south from Crossfell and found there a flock of wild sheep, and they went from the south towards the fell, and tried to drive them down; but still the sheep got away from them up on the fell. Then each began to scold the other, and Thiostolf said at last that Glum had no strength save to tumble about in Hallgerda's arms.

Then Glum said—

"'A man's foes are those of his own house.' Shall I take upbraiding from thee, runaway thrall as thou art?"

Thiostolf said—

"Thou shalt soon have to own that I am no thrall, for I will not yield an inch to thee."

Then Glum got angry, and cut at him with his handaxe, but he threw his axe in the way, and the blow fell

on the haft with a downward stroke and bit into it about the breadth of two fingers. Thiostolf cut at him at once with his axe, and smote him on the shoulder, and the stroke hewed asunder the shoulderbone and collarbone, and the wound bled inwards. Glum grasped at Thiostolf with his left hand so fast, that he fell; but Glum could not hold him, for death came over him. Then Thiostolf covered his body with stones, and took off his gold ring. Then he went straight to Varmalek. Hallgerda was sitting out of doors, and saw that his axe was bloody. He said—

"I know not what thou wilt think of it, but I tell thee Glum is slain."

"That must be thy deed," she says.

"So it is," he says.

She laughed and said—

"Thou dost not stand for nothing in this sport."

"What thinkest thou is best to be done now?" he asked.

"Go to Hrut, my father's brother," she said, "and let him see about thee."

"I do not know," says Thiostolf, "whether this is good advice; but still I will take thy counsel in this matter."

So he took his horse, and rode west to Hrutstede that

night. He binds his horse at the back of the house, and then goes round to the door, and gives a great knock. After that he walks round the house, north about. It happened that Hrut was awake. He sprang up at once, and put on his jerkin and pulled on his shoes. Then he took up his sword, and wrapped a cloak about his left arm, up as far as the elbow. Men woke up just as he went out; there he saw a tall stout man at the back of the house, and knew it was Thiostolf. Hrut asked him what news?

"I tell thee Glum is slain," says Thiostolf.

"Who did the deed?" says Hrut.

"I slew him," says Thiostolf.

"Why rodest thou hither?" says Hrut.

"Hallgerda sent me to thee," says Thiostolf.

"Then she has no hand in this deed," says Hrut, and drew his sword. Thiostolf saw that, and would not be behind hand, so he cuts at Hrut at once. Hrut got out of the way of the stroke by a quick turn, and at the same time struck the back of the axe so smartly with a side-long blow of his left hand, that it flew out of Thiostolf's grasp. Then Hrut made a blow with the sword in his right hand at Thiostolf's leg, just above the knee, and cut it almost off so that it hung by a little piece, and sprang in upon him at the same time, and thrust him hard back. After

that he smote him on the head, and dealt him his death-blow. Thiostolf fell down on his back at full length, and then out came Hrut's men, and saw the tokens of the deed. Hrut made them take Thiostolf away, and throw stones over his body, and then he went to find Hauskuld, and told him of Glum's slaying, and also of Thiostolf's. He thought it harm that Glum was dead and gone, but thanked him for killing Thiostolf. A little while after, Thorarin Ragi's brother hears of his brother Glum's death, then he rides with eleven men behind him west to Hauskuldstede, and Hauskuld welcomed him with both hands, and he is there the night. Hauskuld sent at once for Hrut to come to him, and he went at once, and next day they spoke much of the slaying of Glum, and Thorarin said—"Wilt thou make me any atonement for my brother, for I have had a great loss?"

Hauskuld answered—"I did not slay thy brother, nor did my daughter plot his death; but as soon as ever Hrut knew it he slew Thiostolf."

Then Thorarin held his peace, and thought the matter had taken a bad turn. But Hrut said—"Let us make his journey good; he has indeed had a heavy loss, and if we do that we shall be well spoken of. So let us give him gifts, and then he will be our friend ever afterwards."

So the end of it was, that those brothers gave him

gifts, and he rode back south. He and Hallgerda changed homesteads in the spring, and she went south to Laugarness and he to Varmalek. And now Thorarin is out of the story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FIDDLE MORD'S DEATH.

Now it must be told how Fiddle Mord took a sickness and breathed his last; and that was thought great scathe. His daughter Unna took all the goods he left behind him. She was then still unmarried the second time. She was very lavish, and unthrifty of her property; so that her goods and ready money wasted away, and at last she had scarce anything left but land and stock.

CHAPTER XIX.

GUNNAR COMES INTO THE STORY.

THERE was a man whose name was Gunnar. He was one of Unna's kinsmen, and his mother's name was Rannveig.* Gunnar's father was named Hamond.†

* She was the daughter of Sigfuss, the son of Sighvat the Red; he was slain at Sandhol ferry.

† He was the son of Gunnar Baugsson, after whom Gunnar's

Gunnar Hamond's son dwelt at Lithend, in the Fleet-lithe. He was a tall man in growth, and a strong man —best skilled in arms of all men. He could cut or thrust or shoot if he chose as well with his left as with his right hand, and he smote so swiftly with his sword, that three seemed to flash through the air at once. He was the best shot with the bow of all men, and never missed his mark. He could leap more than his own height, with all his war-gear, and as far backwards as forwards. He could swim like a seal, and there was no game in which it was any good for any one to strive with him; and so it has been said that no man was his match. He was handsome of feature, and fair skinned. His nose was straight, and a little turned up at the end. He was blue-eyed and bright-eyed, and ruddy-cheeked. His hair thick, and of good hue, and hanging down in comely curls. The most courteous of men was he, of sturdy frame and strong will, bountiful and gentle, a fast friend, but hard to please when making them. He was wealthy in goods. His brother's name was Kolskegg; he was a tall strong man, a noble fellow, and undaunted in everything. Another brother's name

holt is called. Hamond's mother's name was Hrafnhilda. She was the daughter of Storolf Heing's son. Storolf was brother to Hrafn the Speaker of the Law, the son of Storolf was Orm the Strong.

was Hjort; he was then in his childhood. Orm Skogarnef was a base-born brother of Gunnar's; he does not come into this story. Arnguda was the name of Gunnar's sister. Hroar, the priest at Tongue, had her to wife.*

CHAPTER XX.

OF NJAL AND HIS CHILDREN.

THERE was a man whose name was Njal. He was the son of Thorgeir Gelling, the son of Thorolf. Njal's mother's name was Asgerda.† Njal dwelt at Bergthorsknoll in the land-isles; he had another homestead on Thorolfsfell. Njal was wealthy in goods, and handsome of face; no beard grew on his chin. He was so great a lawyer, that his match was not to be found. Wise too he was, and foreknowing and fore-

* He was the son of Uni the unborn, Gardar's son who found Iceland. Arnguda's son was Hamond the Halt, who dwelt at Hamondstede.

† She was the daughter of lord Ar the Silent. She had come out hither to Iceland from Norway, and taken land to the west of Markfleet, between Auldastone and Selialandsmull. Her son was Holt-Thorir, the father of Thorleif Crow, from whom the Wood-dwellers are sprung, and of Thorgrim the tall, and Skorargeir.

sighted.* Of good counsel, and ready to give it, and all that he advised men was sure to be the best for them to do. Gentle and generous, he unravelled every man's knotty points who came to see him about them. Bergthora was his wife's name; she was Skarphedinn's daughter, a very high-spirited, brave-hearted woman, but somewhat hard-tempered. They had six children, three daughters and three sons, and they all come afterwards into this story.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNNA GOES TO SEE GUNNAR.

Now it must be told how Unna had lost all her ready money. She made her way to Lithend, and Gunnar greeted his kinswoman well. She stayed there that night, and the next morning they sat out of doors and talked. The end of their talk was, that she told him how heavily she was pressed for money.

* This means that Njal was one of those gifted beings who, according to the firm belief of that age, had a more than human insight into things about to happen. It answers very nearly to the Scottish "second sight."

"This is a bad business," he said.

"What help wilt thou give me out of my distress?" she asked.

He answered—"Take as much money as thou needest from what I have out at interest."

"Nay," she said, "I will not waste thy goods."

"What then dost thou wish?"

"I wish thee to get back my goods out of Hrut's hands," she answered.

"That, methinks, is not likely," said he, "when thy father could not get them back, and yet he was a great lawyer, but I know little about law."

She answered—"Hrut pushed that matter through rather by boldness than by law; besides, my father was old, and that was why men thought it better not to drive things to the uttermost. And now there is none of my kinsmen to take this suit up if thou hast not daring enough."

"I have courage enough," he replied, "to get these goods back; but I do not know how to take the suit up."

"Well!" she answered, "go and see Njal of Bergthorsknoll, he will know how to give thee advice. Besides, he is a great friend of thine."

"'Tis like enough he will give me good advice, as he gives it to every one else," says Gunnar.

So the end of their talk was, that Gunnar undertook her cause, and gave her the money she needed for her housekeeping, and after that she went home.

Now Gunnar rides to see Njal, and he made him welcome, and they began to talk at once.

Then Gunnar said—"I am come to seek a bit of good advice from thee."

Njal replied—"Many of my friends are worthy of this, but still I think I would take more pains for none than for thee."

Gunnar said—"I wish to let thee know that I have undertaken to get Unna's goods back from Hrut."

"A very hard suit to undertake," said Njal, "and one very hazardous how it will go; but still I will get it up for thee in the way I think likeliest to succeed, and the end will be good if thou breakest none of the rules I lay down; if thou dost, thy life is in danger."

"Never fear; I will break none of them," said Gunnar.

Then Njal held his peace for a little while, and after that he spoke as follows:—

CHAPTER XXII.

NJAL'S ADVICE.

"I HAVE thought over the suit, and it will do so. Thou shalt ride from home with two men at thy back. Over all thou shalt have a great rough cloak, and under that, a russet kirtle of cheap stuff, and under all, thy good clothes. Thou must take a small axe in thy hand, and, each of you must have two horses, one fat, the other lean. Thou shalt carry hardware and smith's work with thee hence, and ye must ride off early to-morrow morning, and when ye are come across Whitewater westwards, mind and slouch thy hat well over thy brows. Then men will ask who is this tall man, and thy mates shall say—'Here is Huckster Hedinn the Big, a man from Eyjafirth, who is going about with smith's work for sale.' This Hedinn is ill-tempered and a chatterer—a fellow who thinks he alone knows everything. Very often he snatches back his wares, and flies at men if everything is not done as he wishes. So thou shalt ride west to Borgarfirth offering all sorts of wares for sale, and be sure often to cry off thy bargains, so that it will be noised abroad that Huckster Hedinn is the worst of men to deal with, and that no lies have been told of his bad behaviour. So thou shalt

ride to Northwaterdale, and to Hrutfirth, and Laxriverdale, till thou comest to Hauskuldstede. There thou must stay a night, and sit in the lowest place, and hang thy head down. Hauskuld will tell them all not to meddle nor make with Huckster Hedinn, saying he is a rude unfriendly fellow. Next morning thou must be off early and go to the farm nearest Hrutstede. There thou must offer thy goods for sale, praising up all that is worst, and tinkering up the faults. The master of the house will pry about and find out the faults. Thou must snatch the wares away from him, and speak ill to him. He will say—'Twas not to be hoped that thou wouldst behave well to him, when thou behavest ill to every one else. Then thou shalt fly at him, though it is not thy wont, but mind and spare thy strength, that thou mayest not be found out. Then a man will be sent to Hrutstede to tell Hrut he had best come and part you. He will come at once and ask thee to his house, and thou must accept his offer. Thou shalt greet Hrut and he will answer well. A place will be given thee on the lower bench over against Hrut's high seat. He will ask if thou art from the North, and thou shalt answer that thou art a man of Eyjafirth. He will go on to ask if there are very many famous men there. 'Shabby fellows enough and to spare,' thou must answer. 'Dost

thou know Reykiardale and the parts about?' he will ask. To which thou must answer—'I know all Iceland by heart.'

"'Are there any stout champions left in Reykiardale?' he will ask. 'Thieves and scoundrels,' thou shalt answer. Then Hrut will smile and think it sport to listen. You two will go on to talk of the men in the Eastfirth Quarter, and thou must always find something to say against them. At last your talk will come Rangrivervale, and then thou must say, there is small choice of men left in those parts since Fiddle Mord died. At the same time sing some stave to please Hrut, for I know thou art a skald. Hrut will ask what makes thee say there is never a man to come in Mord's place? and then thou must answer, that he was so wise a man and so good a taker up of suits, that he never made a false step in upholding his leadership. He will ask—'Dost thou know how matters fared between me and him?'

"'I know all about it,' thou must reply, 'he took thy wife from thee, and thou hadst not a word to say.'

"Then Hrut will ask—'Dost thou not think it was some disgrace to him when he could not get back his goods, though he set the suit on foot?'

"'I can answer thee that well enough,' thou must say. 'Thou challengedst him to single combat; but he was

old, and so his friends advised him not to fight with thee, and then they let the suit fall to the ground.'

"'True enough,' Hrut will say. 'I said so, and that passed for law among foolish men; but the suit might have been taken up again at another Thing if he had the heart.'

"'I know all that,' thou must say.

"Then he will ask—'Dost thou know anything about law?'

"'Up in the North I am thought to know something about it,' thou shalt say. 'But still I should like thee to tell me how this suit should be taken up.'

"'What suit dost thou mean?' he will ask.

"'A suit,' thou must answer, 'which does not concern me. I want to know how a man must set to work who wishes to get back Unna's dower.'

"Then Hrut will say—'In this suit I must be summoned so that I can hear the summons, or I must be summoned here in my lawful house.'

"'Recite the summons, then,' thou must say, 'and I will say it after thee.'

"Then Hrut will summon himself; and mind and pay great heed to every word he says. After that Hrut will bid thee repeat the summons, and thou must do so, and say it all wrong, so that no more than every other word is right.

"Then Hrut will smile and not mistrust thee, but say that scarce a word is right. Thou must throw the blame on thy companions, and say they put thee out, and then thou must ask him to say the words first, word by word, and to let thee say the words after him. He will give thee leave, and summon himself in the suit, and thou shalt summon after him there and then, and this time say every word right. When it is done, ask Hrut if that were rightly summoned, and he will answer 'there is no flaw to be found in it.' Then thou shalt say in a loud voice, so that thy companions may hear—

"'I summon thee in the suit which Unna Mord's daughter has made over to me with her plighted hand.'

"But when men are sound asleep, you shall rise and take your bridles and saddles, and tread softly, and go out of the house, and put your saddles on your fat horses in the fields, and so ride off on them, but leave the others behind you. You must ride up into the hills away from the home pastures and stay there three nights, for about so long will they seek you. After that ride home south, riding always by night and resting by day. As for us, we will then ride this summer to the Thing, and help thee in thy suit." So Gunnar thanked Njal, and first of all rode home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HUCKSTER HEDINN.

GUNNAR rode from home two nights afterwards, and two men with him; they rode along until they got on Blue-woodheath, and then men on horseback met them and asked who that tall man might be of whom so little was seen. But his companions said it was Huckster Hedinn. Then the others said a worse was not to be looked for behind, when such a man as he went before. Hedinn at once made as though he would have set upon them, but yet each went their way. So Gunnar went on doing everything as Njal had laid it down for him, and when he came to Hauskuldstede he stayed there the night, and thence he went down the dale till he came to the next farm to Hrutstede. There he offered his wares for sale, and Hedinn fell at once upon the farmer. This was told to Hrut, and he sent for Hedinn, and Hedinn went at once to see Hrut, and had a good welcome. Hrut seated him over against himself, and their talk went pretty much as Njal had guessed; but when they came to talk of Rangrivervale, and Hrut asked about the men there, Gunnar sung this stave—

"Men in sooth are slow to find,—
So the people speak by stealth,
Often this hath reached my ears,—
All through Rangar's rolling vales.
Still I trow that Fiddle Mord,
Tried his hand in fight of yore;
Sure was never gold-bestower,
Such a man for might and wit."

Then Hrut said, "Thou art a skald, Hedinn. But hast thou never heard how things went between me and Mord?" Then Hedinn sung another stave—

"Once I ween I heard the rumour,
How the Lord of rings* bereft thee;
From thine arms earth's offspring† tearing,
Trickfull he and trustfull thou.
Then the men, the buckler-bearers,
Begged the mighty gold-begetter,
Sharp sword oft of old he reddened,
Not to stand in strife with thee."

So they went on, till Hrut, in answer told him how the suit must be taken up, and recited the summons. Hedinn repeated it all wrong, and Hrut burst out laughing, and had no mistrust. Then he said, Hrut must summon once more, and Hrut did so. Then Hedinn repeated the summons a second time, and this time right, and called his companions to witness how he summoned

* Lord of rings, a periphrasis for a chief, that is, Mord.

† Earth's offspring, a periphrasis for woman, that is, Unna.

Hrut in a suit which Unna Mord's daughter had made over to him with her plighted hand. At night he went to sleep like other men, but as soon as ever Hrut was sound asleep, they took their clothes and arms, and went out and came to their horses, and rode off across the river, and so up along the bank by Hiardarholt till the dale broke off among the hills, and so there they are upon the fells between Laxriverdale and Hawkdale, having got to a spot where no one could find them unless he had fallen on them by chance.

Hauskuld wakes up that night at Hauskuldstede, and roused all his household. "I will tell you my dream," he said. "I thought I saw a great bear go out of this house, and I knew at once this beast's match was not to be found; two cubs followed him, wishing well to the bear, and they all made for Hrutstede and went into the house there. After that I woke. Now I wish to ask if any of you saw aught about yon tall man."

Then one man answered him—"I saw how a golden fringe and a bit of scarlet cloth peeped out at his arm, and on his right arm he had a ring of gold."

Hauskuld said—"This beast is no man's fetch, but Gunnar's of Lithend, and now methinks I see all about it. Up! let us ride to Hrutstede." And they did so. Hrut lay in his locked bed, and asks who have

come there? Hauskuld tells who he is, and asked what guests might be there in the house?

"Only Huckster Hedinn is here," says Hrut.

"A broader man across the back, it will be, I fear," says Hauskuld, "I guess here must have been Gunnar of Lithend."

"Then there has been a pretty trial of cunning," says Hrut.

"What has happened?" says Hauskuld.

"I told him how to take up Unna's suit, and I summoned myself and he summoned after, and now he can use this first step in the suit, and it is right in law."

"There has, indeed, been a great falling off of wit on one side," said Hauskuld, and Gunnar cannot have planned it all by himself; Njal must be at the bottom of this plot, for there is not his match for wit in all the land."

Now they look for Hedinn, but he is already off and away; after that they gathered folk, and looked for them three days, but could not find them. Gunnar rode south from the fell to Hawkdale and so east of Skard, and north to Holtbeaconheath, and so on until he got home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GUNNAR AND HRUT STRIVE AT THE THING.

GUNNAR rode to the Althing, and Hrut and Hauskuld rode thither too with a very great company. Gunnar pursues his suit, and began by calling on his neighbours to bear witness, but Hrut and his brother had it in their minds to make an onslaught on him, but they mistrusted their strength.

Gunnar next went to the court of the men of Broadfirth, and bade Hrut listen to his oath and declaration of the cause of the suit, and to all the proofs which he was about to bring forward. After that he took his oath, and declared his case. After that he brought forward his witnesses of the summons, along with his witnesses, that the suit had been handed over to him. All this time Njal was not at the court. Now Gunnar pursued his suit till he called on the defendant to reply. Then Hrut took witness, and said the suit was naught, and that there was a flaw in the pleading; he declared that it had broken down because Gunnar had failed to call those three witnesses which ought to have been brought before the court. The first, that which was taken before the marriage-bed, the second, before the

man's door, the third, at the Hill of Laws. By this time Njal was come to the court and said the suit and pleading might still be kept alive if they chose to strive in that way.

"No," says Gunnar, "I will not have that; I will do the same to Hrut as he did to Mord my kinsman;—or, are those brothers Hrut and Hauskuld so near that they may hear my voice."

"Hear it we can," says Hrut. "What dost thou wish?"

Gunnar said—"Now all men here present be ear-witnesses, that I challenge thee Hrut to single combat, and we shall fight to-day on the holm, which is here in Oxwater. But if thou wilt not fight with me, then pay up all the money this very day."

After that Gunnar sung a stave—

"Yes, so must it be, this morning—
Now my mind is full of fire—
Hrut with me on yonder island
Raises roar of helm and shield.
All that hear my words bear witness,
Warriors grasping Woden's guard,
Unless the wealthy wight down payeth
Dower of wife with flowing veil."

After that Gunnar went away from the court with all his followers. Hrut and Hauskuld went home too, and the suit was never pursued nor defended from that day forth. Hrut said, as soon as he got inside the booth,

"This has never happened to me before, that any man has offered me combat and I have shunned it."

"Then thou must mean to fight," says Hauskuld, "but that shall not be if I have my way; for thou comest no nearer to Gunnar than Mord would have come to thee, and we had better both of us pay up the money to Gunnar."

After that the brothers asked the householders of their own country what they would lay down, and they one and all said they would lay down as much as Hrut wished.

"Let us go then," says Hauskuld, "to Gunnar's booth, and pay down the money out of hand." That was told to Gunnar, and he went out into the doorway of the booth, and Hauskuld said—

"Now it is thine to take the money."

Gunnar said—

"Pay it down, then, for I am ready to take it."

So they paid down the money truly out of hand, and then Hauskuld said—"Enjoy it now, as thou hast gotten it." Then Gunnar sang another stave:—

"Men who wield the blade of battle
Hoarded wealth may well enjoy,
Guileless gotten this at least,
Golden meed I fearless take;
But if we for woman's quarrel,
Warriors born to brandish sword,
Glut the wolf with manly gore,
Worse the lot of both would be."

Hrut answered—"Ill will be thy meed for this."

"Be that as it may," says Gunnar.

Then Hauskuld and his brother went home to their booth, and he had much upon his mind, and said to Hrut—

"Will this unfairness of Gunnar's never be avenged?"

"Not so," says Hrut; "'twill be avenged on him sure enough, but we shall have no share nor profit in that vengeance. And after all it is most likely that he will turn to our stock to seek for friends."

After that they left off speaking of the matter. Gunnar showed Njal the money, and he said—"The suit has gone off well."

"Ay," says Gunnar, "but it was all thy doing."

Now men rode home from the Thing, and Gunnar got very great honour from the suit. Gunnar handed over all the money to Unna, and would have none of it, but said he thought he ought to look for more help from her and her kin hereafter than from other men. She said, so it should be.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNNA'S SECOND WEDDING.

THERE was a man named Valgard, he kept house at Hof by Rangriver, he was the son of Jorund the Priest, and his brother was Wolf Aurpriest.* Those brothers, Wolf Aurpriest, and Valgard the guileful, set off to woo Unna, and she gave herself away to Valgard without the advice of any of her kinsfolk. But Gunnar and Njal, and many others thought ill of that, for he was a cross-grained man and had few friends. They begot between them a son, whose name was Mord, and he is long in this story. When he was grown to man's estate, he worked ill to his kinsfolk, but worst of all to Gunnar. He was a crafty man in his temper, but spiteful in his counsels.

Now we will name Njal's sons. Skarphedinn was the

* The son of Ranveig the Silly, the son of Valgard, the son of Æfar, the son of Vemund Wordstopper, the son of Thorolf Hooknose, the son of Thrand the Old, the son of Harold Hilditann, the son of Hræreck Ringscatterer. The mother of Harold Hilditann, was Aud the daughter of Ivar Widefathom, the son of Halfdan the Clever. The brother of Valgard the guileful was Wolf Aurpriest—from whom the Point-dwellers sprung—Wolf Aurpriest was the father of Swart, the father of Lodmund, the father of Sigfus, the father of Saemund the Wise. But from Valgard is sprung Kolbein the Young.

eldest of them. He was a tall man in growth, and strong withal; a good swordsman; he could swim like a seal, the swiftest-footed of men, and bold and dauntless; he had a great flow of words and quick utterance; a good skald too; but still for the most part he kept himself well in hand; his hair was dark brown, with crisp curly locks; he had good eyes; his features were sharp, and his face ashen pale, his nose turned up and his front teeth stuck out, and his mouth was very ugly. Still he was the most soldierlike of men.

Grim was the name of Njal's second son. He was fair of face and wore his hair long. His hair was dark, and he was comelier to look on than Skarphedinn. A tall strong man.

Helgi was the name of Njal's third son. He too was fair of face and had fine hair. He was a strong man and well-skilled in arms. He was a man of sense and knew well how to behave. They were all unwedded at that time, Njal's sons.

Hauskuld was the fourth of Njal's sons. He was base-born. His mother was Rodny, and she was Hauskuld's daughter, the sister of Ingialld of the Springs.

Njal asked Skarphedinn one day if he would take to himself a wife. He bade his father settle the matter. Then Njal asked for his hand Thorhilda, the daughter of

Ranvir of Thorolfsfell, and that was why they had another homestead there after that. Skarphedinn got Thorhilda, but he stayed still with his father to the end. Grim wooed Astrid of Deepback; she was a widow and very wealthy. Grim got her to wife, and yet lived on with Njal.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF ASGRIM AND HIS CHILDREN.

THERE was a man named Asgrim.* He was Ellidagrim's son. The brother of Asgrim Ellidagrim's son was Sigfus.† Gauk Trandil's son was Asgrim's foster-brother, who is said to have been the fairest man of his day, and best skilled in all things; but matters went ill with them, for Asgrim slew Gauk.

Asgrim had two sons, and each of them was named Thórhall. They were both hopeful men. Grim was the name of another of Asgrim's sons, and Thorhalla

* Ellidagrim was Asgrim's son, Aundot the crow's son. His mother's name was Jorunn, and she was the daughter of Teit, the son of Kettlebjörn the Old of Mossfell. The mother of Teit was Helga, daughter of Thord Skeggi's son, Hrapp's son, Bjorn's son the rough-footed, Grim's son, the lord of Sogn in Norway. The mother of Jorunn was Olof harvest-heal, daughter of Bodvar, Viking-Kari's son.

† His daughter was Thorgerda, mother of Sigfus, the father of Sæmund the learned.

was his daughter's name. She was the fairest of women, and well behaved.

Njal came to talk with his son Helgi, and said, "I have thought of a match for thee, if thou wilt follow my advice."

"That I will surely," says he, "for I know that thou both meanest me well, and canst do well for me; but whither hast thou turned thine eyes."

"We will go and woo Asgrim Ellidagrim's son's daughter, for that is the best choice we can make."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HELGI NJAL'S SON'S WOOING.

A LITTLE after they rode out across Thurso water, and fared till they came into Tongue. Asgrim was at home, and gave them a hearty welcome; and they were there that night. Next morning they began to talk, and then Njal raised the question of the wooing, and asked for Thorhalla for his son Helgi's hand. Asgrim answered that well, and said there were no men with whom he would be more willing to make this bargain than with them. They fell a-talking then about terms, and the end of it was that Asgrim betrothed his daughter to

Helgi, and the bridal day was named. Gunnar was at that feast, and many other of the best men. After the feast Njal offered to foster in his house Thorhall, Asgrim's son, and he was with Njal long after. He loved Njal more than his own father. Njal taught him law, so that he became the greatest lawyer in Iceland in those days.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HALLVARD COMES OUT TO ICELAND.

THERE came a ship out from Norway, and ran into Arnbæl's Oyce,* and the master of the ship was Hallvard, the white, a man from the Bay.† He went to stay at Lithend, and was with Gunnar that winter, and was

* "Oyce," a north country word for the mouth of a river, from the Icelandic *ós*.

† "The Bay" (comp. ch. ii., and other passages), the name given to the great bay in the east of Norway, the entrance of which from the North Sea is the Cattegat, and at the end of which is the Christiania Firth. The name also applies to the land round the Bay, which thus formed a district, the boundary of which, on the one side, was the promontory called Lindesnæs, or the Naze, and on the other, the Göta-Elf, the river on which the Swedish town of Gottenburg stands, and off the mouth of which lies the island of Hisingen, mentioned shortly after.

always asking him to fare abroad with him. Gunnar spoke little about it, but yet said more unlikely things might happen; and about spring he went over to Bergthorsknoll to find out from Njal whether he thought it a wise step in him to go abroad.

"I think it is wise," says Njal; "they will think thee there an honourable man, as thou art."

"Wilt thou perhaps take my goods into thy keeping while I am away, for I wish my brother Kolskegg to fare with me; but I would that thou shouldst see after my household along with my mother."

"I will not throw anything in the way of that," says Njal; "lean on me in this thing as much as thou likest."

"Good go with thee for thy words," says Gunnar, and he rides then home.

The Easterling* fell again to talk with Gunnar that he should fare abroad. Gunnar asked if he had ever sailed to other lands?. He said he had sailed to every one of them that lay between Norway and Russia, and so, too, I have sailed to Biarmaland.

* Easterling, *i. e.*, the Norseman Halvard.

† Permia, the country one comes to after doubling the North Cape.

"Wilt thou sail with me eastward ho?" says Gunnar.

"That I will of a surety," says he.

Then Gunnar made up his mind to sail abroad with him. Njal took all Gunnar's goods into his keeping.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GUNNAR GOES ABROAD.

So Gunnar fared abroad, and Kolskegg with him. They sailed first to Tönsberg,* and were there that winter. There had then been a shift of rulers in Norway. Harold Grayfell was then dead, and so was Gunnhillda. Earl Hacon the Bad, Sigurd's son, Hacon's son, Gritgarth's son, then ruled the realm. The mother of Hacon was Bergliot, the daughter of Earl Thorir. Her mother was Olof harvest-heal. She was Harold Fair-hair's daughter.

Hallvard asks Gunnar if he would make up his mind to go to Earl Hacon?

"No; I will not do that," says Gunnar. "Hast thou ever a long-ship?"

"I have two," he says.

* A town at the mouth of the Christiania Firth. It was a great place for traffic in early times, and was long the only mart in the south-east of Norway.

"Then I would that we two went on warfare; and let us get men to go with us."

"I will do that," says Hallvard.

After that they went to the Bay, and took with them two ships, and fitted them out thence. They had good choice of men, for much praise was said of Gunnar.

"Whither wilt thou first fare?" says Gunnar.

"I wish to go south-east to Hisingen, to see my kinsman Oliver," says Hallvard.

"What dost thou want of him?" says Gunnar.

He answered—"He is a fine brave fellow, and he will be sure to get us some more strength for our voyage."

"Then let us go thither," says Gunnar.

So, as soon as they were "boun," they held on east to Hisingen, and had there a hearty welcome. Gunnar had only been there a short time ere Oliver made much of him. Oliver asks about his voyage, and Hallvard says that Gunnar wishes to go a-warfaring to gather goods for himself.

"There's no use thinking of that," says Oliver "when ye have no force."

"Well," says Hallvard, "then you may add to it."

"So I do mean to strengthen Gunnar somewhat," says Oliver; "and though thou reckonest thyself my kith and kin, I think there is more good in him."

"What force, now, wilt thou add to ours?" he asks.

"Two long ships, one with twenty, and the other with thirty seats for rowers."

"Who shall man them?" asks Hallvard.

"I will man one of them with my own house-carles, and the freemen around shall man the other. But still I have found out that strife has come into the river, and I know not whether ye two will be able to get away; for *they* are in the river."

"Who?" says Hallvard.

"Brothers twain," says Oliver; "one's name is Vandil, and the other's Karli, sons of Sjolf the Old, east away out of Gothland."

Hallvard told Gunnar that Oliver had added some ships to theirs, and Gunnar was glad at that. They busked them for their voyage thence, till they were "allboun." Then Gunnar and Hallvard went before Oliver, and thanked him; he bade them fare warily for the sake of those brothers.

CHAPTER XXX.

GUNNAR GOES A-SEA-ROVING.

So Gunnar held on out of the river, and he and Kolskegg were both on board one ship. But Hallvard was on board

another. Now, they see the ships before them, and then Gunnar spoke, and said—

"Let us be ready for anything if they turn towards us! but else let us have nothing to do with them."

So they did that, and made all ready on board their ships. The others parted their ships asunder, and made a fareway between the ships. Gunnar fared straight on between the ships, but Vandil caught up a grappling-iron, and cast it between their ships and Gunnar's ship, and began at once to drag it towards him.

Oliver had given Gunnar a good sword; Gunnar now drew it, and had not yet put on his helm. He leapt at once on the forecastle of Vandil's ship, and gave one man his death-blow. Karli ran his ship alongside the other side of Gunnar's ship, and hurled a spear athwart the deck, and aimed at him about the waist. Gunnar sees this, and turned him about so quickly, that no eye could follow him, and caught the spear with his left hand, and hurled it back at Karli's ship, and that man got his death who stood before it. Kolskegg snatched up a grapnel and casts it at Karli's ship, and the fluke fell inside the hold, and went out through one of the planks, and in rushed the coal-blue sea, and all the men sprang on board other ships.

Now Gunnar leapt back to his own ship, and then

Hallvard came up, and now a great battle arose. They saw now that their leader was unflinching, and every man did as well as he could. Sometimes Gunnar smote with the sword, and sometimes he hurled the spear, and many a man had his bane at his hand. Kolskegg backed him well. As for Karli, he hastened in a ship to his brother Vandil, and thence they fought that day. During the day Kolskegg took a rest on Gunnar's ship, and Gunnar sees that. Then he sung a song—

"For the eagle ravine-eager,
Raven of my race, to-day
Better surely hast thou catered,
Lord of gold, than for thyself;
Here the morn come greedy ravens,
Many a rill of wolf* to sup,
But thee burning thirst down-beareth,
Prince of battle's Parliament!".

After that Kolskegg took a beaker full of mead, and drank it off, and went on fighting afterwards; and so it came about that those brothers sprang up on the ship of Vandil and his brother, and Kolskegg went on one side, and Gunnar on the other. Against Gunnar came Vandil, and smote at once at him with his sword, and the blow fell on his shield. Gunnar gave the shield a twist as the sword pierced it, and broke it short off at the hilt. Then Gunnar smote back at Vandil, and three swords

* Rill of wolf—stream of blood.

seemed to be aloft, and Vandil could not see how to shun the blow. Then Gunnar cut both his legs from under him, and at the same time Kolskegg ran Karli through with a spear. After that they took great war spoil.

Thence they held on south to Denmark, and thence east to Smoland,* and had victory wherever they went. They did not come back in autumn. The next summer they held on to Reval, and fell in there with sea-rovers, and fought at once, and won the fight. After that they steered east to Osel,† and lay there somewhile under a ness. There they saw a man coming down from the ness above them; Gunnar went on shore to meet the man, and they had a talk. Gunnar asked him his name, and he said it was Tofi. Gunnar asked again what he wanted.

"Thee I want to see," says the man. "Two war-ships lie on the other side under the ness, and I will tell thee who command them: two brothers are the captains—one's name is Hallgrim, and the other's Kolskegg. I know them to be mighty men of war; and I know too that they have such good weapons that the like are not to be had. Hallgrim has a bill which he had made by seething-spells; and this is what the spells say, that

* A province of Sweden.

† An island in the Baltic, off the coast of Esthonia.

no weapon shall give him his death-blow save that bill. That thing follows it too that it is known at once when a man is to be slain with that bill, for something sings in it so loudly that it may be heard a long way off—such a strong nature has that bill in it."

Then Gunnar sang a song—

"Soon shall I that spearhead seize,
And the bold sea-rover slay,
Him whose blows on headpiece ring,
Heaper up of piles of dead.
Then on Endil's courser* bounding,
O'er the sea-depths I will ride,
While the wretch who spells abuseth,
Life shall lose in Sigar's storm."†

"Kolskegg has a short sword; that is also the best of weapons. Force, too, they have—a third more than ye. They have also much goods, and have stowed them away on land, and I know clearly where they are. But they have sent a spy-ship off the ness, and they know all about you. Now they are getting themselves ready as fast as they can; and as soon as they are 'boun,' they mean to run out against you. Now you have either to row away at once, or to busk yourselves as quickly as ye can; but if ye win the day, then I will lead you to all their store of goods."

* Endil's courser—periphrasis for a ship.

† Sigar's storm—periphrasis for a sea-fight.

Gunnar gave him a golden finger-ring, and went afterwards to his men and told them that war-ships lay on the other side of the ness, "and they know all about us; so let us take to our arms and busk us well, for now there is gain to be got."

Then they busked them; and just when they were boun they see ships coming up to them. And now a fight sprung up between them, and they fought long, and many men fell. Gunnar slew many a man. Hallgrim and his men leapt on board Gunnar's ship. Gunnar turns to meet him, and Hallgrim thrust at him with his bill. There was a boom athwart the ship, and Gunnar leapt nimbly back over it. Gunnar's shield was just before the boom, and Hallgrim thrust his bill into it, and through it, and so on into the boom. Gunnar cut at Hallgrim's arm hard, and lamed the forearm, but the sword would not bite. Then down fell the bill, and Gunnar seized the bill, and thrust Hallgrim through, and then sang a song—

"Slain is he who spoiled the people,
Lashing them with flashing steel;
Heard have I how Hallgrim's magic
Helm-rod forged in foreign land;
All men know, of heart-strings doughty,
How this bill hath come to me,
Deft in fight, the wolf's dear feeder,
Death alone us two shall part."

And that vow Gunnar kept, in that he bore the bill while he lived. Those namesakes [the two Kolskeggs] fought together, and it was a near thing which would get the better of it. Then Gunnar came up, and gave the other Kolskegg his death-blow. After that the sea-rovers begged for mercy. Gunnar let them have that choice, and he let them also count the slain, and take the goods which the dead men owned, but he gave the others whom he spared their arms and their clothing, and bade them be off to the lands that fostered them. So they went off, and Gunnar took all the goods that were left behind.

Tofi came to Gunnar after the battle, and offered to lead him to that store of goods which the sea-rovers had stowed away, and said that it was both better and larger than that which they had already got.

Gunnar said he was willing to go, and so he went ashore, and Tofi before him, to a wood, and Gunnar behind him. They came to a place where a great heap of wood was piled together. Tofi says the goods were under there, then they tossed off the wood, and found under it both gold and silver, clothes, and good weapons. They bore those goods to the ships, and Gunnar asks Tofi in what way he wished him to repay him.

Tofi answered, "I am a Dansk man by race, and I wish thou wouldst bring me to my kinsfolk."

Gunnar asks why he was there away east?

"I was taken by sea-rovers," says Tofi, "and they put me on land here in Osel, and here I have been ever since."

CHAPTER XXXI.

GUNNAR took Tofi on board, and said to Kolskegg and Hallvard, "Now we will hold our course for the north lands."

They were well pleased at that, and bade him have his way. So Gunnar sailed from the east with much goods. He had ten ships, and ran in with them to Heidarby in Denmark. King Harold Gorm's son, was there up the country, and he was told about Gunnar, and how too that there was no man his match in all Iceland. He sent men to him to ask him to come to him, and Gunnar went at once to see the king, and the king made him a hearty welcome, and sat him down next to himself. Gunnar was there half a month. The king made himself sport by letting Gunnar prove himself in divers feats of strength against his men, and there were none that were his match even in one feat.

Then the king said to Gunnar, "It seems to me as though thy peer is not to be found far or near," and

the king offered to get Gunnar a wife, and to raise him to great power if he would settle down there.

Gunnar thanked the king for his offer and said—"I will first of all sail back to Iceland to see my friends and kinsfolk."

"Then thou wilt never come back to us," says the king.

"Fate will settle that, lord," says Gunnar.

Gunnar gave the king a good long-ship, and much goods besides, and the king gave him a robe of honour, and golden-seamed gloves, and a fillet with a knot of gold on it, and a Russian hat.

Then Gunnar fared north to Hisingen. Oliver welcomed him with both hands, and he gave back to Oliver his ships, with their lading, and said that was his share of the spoil. Oliver took the goods, and said Gunnar was a good man and true, and bade him stay with him some while. Hallvard asked Gunnar if he had a mind to go to see Earl Hacon. Gunnar said that was near his heart, "for now I am somewhat proved, but then I was not tried at all when thou badest me do this before."

After that they fared north to Drontheim to see Earl Hacon, and he gave Gunnar a hearty welcome, and bade him stay with him that winter, and Gunnar

took that offer, and every man thought him a man of great worth. At Yule the Earl gave him a gold ring.

Gunnar set his heart on Bergliota, the Earl's kinswoman, and it was often to be seen from the Earl's way, that he would have given her to him to wife if Gunnar had said anything about that.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GUNNAR COMES OUT TO ICELAND.

WHEN the spring came, the Earl asks Gunnar what course he meant to take. He said he would go to Iceland. The Earl said that had been a bad year for grain, "and there will be little sailing out to Iceland, but still thou shalt have meal and timber both in thy ship."

Gunnar fitted out his ship as early as he could, and Hallvard fared out with him and Kolskegg. They came out early in the summer, and made Arnbæl's Oyce before the Thing met.

Gunnar rode home from the ship, but got men to strip her and lay her up. But when they came home all men were glad to see them. They were blithe and merry to their household nor had their haughtiness grown while they were away.

Gunnar asks if Njal were at home ; and he was told that he was at home ; then he let them saddle his horse, and those brothers rode over to Bergthorsknoll.

Njal was glad at their coming, and begged them to stay there that night, and Gunnar told him of his voyages.

Njal said he was a man of the greatest mark, " and thou hast been much proved ; but still thou wilt be more tried hereafter ; for many will envy thee."

" With all men I would wish to stand well," says Gunnar.

" Much bad will happen," says Njal, " and thou wilt always have some quarrel to ward off."

" So be it, then," says Gunnar, " so that I have a good ground on my side."

" So will it be too," says Njal, " if thou hast not to smart for others."

Njal asked Gunnar if he would ride to the Thing. Gunnar said he was going to ride thither, and asks Njal whether he were going to ride ; but he said he would not ride thither, " and if I had my will thou wouldst do the like."

Gunnar rode home, and gave Njal good gifts, and thanked him for the care he had taken of his goods. Kolskegg urged him on much to ride to the Thing,

saying, "There thy honour will grow, for many will flock to see thee there."

"That has been little to my mind," says Gunnar, "to make a show of myself; but I think it good and right to meet good and worthy men."

Hallvard by this time was also come thither, and offered to ride to the Thing with them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

GUNNAR'S WOOING.

So Gunnar rode, and they all rode. But when they came to the Thing they were so well arrayed that none could match them in bravery; and men came out of every booth to wonder at them. Gunnar rode to the booths of the men of Rangriver, and was there with his kinsmen. Many men came to see Gunnar, and ask tidings of him; and he was easy and merry to all men, and told them all they wished to hear.

It happened one day that Gunnar went away from the Hill of Laws, and passed by the booths of the men from Mossfell; then he saw a woman coming to meet him, and she was in goodly attire; but when they met she spoke to Gunnar at once. He took her greeting

well, and asks what woman she might be. She told him her name was Hallgerda, and said she was Hauskuld's daughter, Dalakoll's son. She spoke up boldly to him, and bade him tell her of his voyages; but he said he would not gainsay her a talk. Then they sat them down and talked. She was so clad that she had on a red kirtle, and had thrown over her a scarlet cloak trimmed with needlework down to the waist. Her hair came down to her bosom, and was both fair and full. Gunnar was clad in the scarlet clothes which King Harold Gorm's son had given him; he had also the gold ring on his arm which Earl Hacon had given him.

So they talked long out loud, and at last it came about that he asked whether she were unmarried. She said, so it was, "and there are not many who would run the risk of that."

"Thinkest thou none good enough for thee?"

"Not that," she says, "but I am said to be hard to please in husbands."

"How wouldst thou answer, were I to ask for thee?"

"That can not be in thy mind," she says.

"It is though," says he.

"If thou hast any mind that way, go and see my father."

After that they broke off their talk.

Gunnar went straightway to the Dalesmen's booths, and met a man outside the doorway, and asks whether Hauskuld were inside the booth?

The man says that he was. Then Gunnar went in, and Hauskuld and Hrut made him welcome. He sat down between them, and no one could find out from their talk that there had ever been any misunderstanding between them. At last Gunnar's speech turned thither; how these brothers would answer if he asked for Hallgerda?

"Well," says Hauskuld, "if that is indeed thy mind."

Gunnar says that he is in earnest, "but we so parted last time, that many would think it unlikely that we should ever be bound together."

"How thinkest thou, kinsman Hrut?" says Hauskuld.

Hrut answered, "Methinks this is no even match."

"How dost thou make that out?" says Gunnar.

Hrut spoke—"In this wise will I answer thee about this matter, as is the very truth. Thou art a brisk brave man, well to do, and unblemished; but she is much mixed up with ill report, and I will not cheat thee in anything.

"Good go with thee for thy words," says Gunnar, "but still I shall hold that for true, that the old

feud weighs with ye, if ye will not let me make this match."

"Not so," says Hrut, "'tis more because I see that thou art unable to help thyself; but though we make no bargain, we would still be thy friends."

"I have talked to her about it," says Gunnar, "and it is not far from her mind."

Hrut says—"I know that you have both set your hearts on this match; and, besides, ye two are those who run the most risk as to how it turns out."

Hrut told Gunnar unasked all about Hallgerda's temper, and Gunnar at first thought that there was more than enough that was wanting; but at last it came about that they struck a bargain.

Then Hallgerda was sent for, and they talked over the business when she was by, and now, as before, they made her betroth herself. The bridal feast was to be at Lithend, and at first they were to set about it secretly; but the end after all was that every one knew of it.

Gunnar rode home from the Thing, and came to Bergthorsknoll, and told Njal of the bargain he had made. He took it heavily.

Gunnar asks Njal why he thought this so unwise?

"Because from her," says Njal, "will arise all kind of ill if she comes hither east."

"Never shall she spoil our friendship," says Gunnar.

"Ah! but yet that may come very near," says Njal; "and, besides, thou wilt have always to make atonement for her."

Gunnar asked Njal to the wedding, and all those as well whom he wished should be at it from Njal's house.

Njal promised to go; and after that Gunnar rode home, and then rode about the district to bid men to his wedding.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF THRAIN SIGFUS' SON.

THERE was a man named Thrain, he was the son of Sigfus, the son of Sighvat the Red. He kept house at Gritwater on Fleetlithe. He was Gunnar's kinsman, and a man of great mark. He had to wife Thorhillda Skaldwife; she had a sharp tongue of her own, and was given to jeering. Thrain loved her little. He and his wife were bidden to the wedding, and she and Bergthora, Skarphedinn's daughter, Njal's wife, waited on the guests with meat and drink.

Kettle was the name of the second son of Sigfus; he kept house in the Mark, east of Markfleet. He had to wife Thorgerda, Njal's daughter. Thorkell was the

name of the third son of Sigfus; the fourth's name was Mord; the fifth's Lambi; the sixth's Sigmund; the seventh's, Sigurd. These were all Gunnar's kinsmen, and great champions. Gunnar bade them all to the wedding.

Gunnar had also bidden Valgard the guileful, and Wolf Aurpriest, and their sons Runolf and Mord.

Hauskuld and Hrut came to the wedding with a very great company, and the sons of Hauskuld, Thorleik, and Olof, were there; the bride, too, came along with them, and her daughter Thorgerda came also, and she was one of the fairest of women; she was then fourteen winters old. Many other women were with her, and besides there were Thorkatla Asgrim Ellidagrim's son's daughter, and Njal's two daughters, Thorgerda and Helga.

Gunnar had already many guests to meet them, and he thus arranged his men. He sat on the middle of the bench, and on the inside, away from him, Thrain Sigfus' son, then Wolf Aurpriest, then Valgard the guileful, then Mord and Runolf, then the other sons of Sigfus, Lambi sat outermost of them.

Next to Gunnar on the outside, away from him, sat Njal, then Skarphedinn, then Helgi, then Grim, then Hauskuld Njal's son, then Hafr the Wise, then Ingialld

from the Springs, then the sons of Thorir from Holt away east. Thorir would sit outermost of the men of mark, for every one was pleased with the seat he got.

Hauskuld, the bride's father, sat on the middle of the bench over against Gunnar, but his sons sat on the inside away from him; Hrut sat on the outside away from Hauskuld, but it is not said how the others were placed. The bride sat in the middle of the cross bench on the dais; but on one hand of her sat her daughter Thorgerda, and on the other Thorkatla Asgrim Ellidagrim's son's daughter.

Thorhillda went about waiting on the guests, and Bergthora bore the meat on the board.

Now Thrain Sigfus' son kept staring at Thorgerda Glum's daughter; his wife Thorhillda saw this, and she got wroth, and made a couplet upon him.

"Thrain," she says,

> "Gaping mouths are no wise good,
> Goggle eyne are in thy head."

He rose at once up from the board, and said he would put Thorhillda away. "I will not bear her jibes and jeers any longer;" and he was so quarrelsome about this, that he would not be at the feast unless she were driven away. And so it was, that she went away;

and now each man sat in his place, and they drank and were glad.

Then Thrain began to speak—"I will not whisper about that which is in my mind. This I will ask thee, Hauskuld Dalakoll's son, wilt thou give me to wife Thorgerda, thy kinswoman?"

"I do not know that," says Hauskuld; "methinks thou art ill parted from the one thou hadst before. But what kind of man is he, Gunnar?"

Gunnar answers—"I will not say aught about the man, because he is near of kin; but say thou about him, Njal," says Gunnar, "for all men will believe it."

Njal spoke, and said—"That is to be said of this man, that the man is well to do for wealth, and a proper man in all things. A man, too, of the greatest mark; so that ye may well make this match with him.

Then Hauskuld spoke—"What thinkest thou we ought to do, kinsman Hrut?"

"Thou mayst make the match, because it is an even one for her," says Hrut.

Then they talk about the terms of the bargain, and are soon of one mind on all points.

Then Gunnar stands up, and Thrain too, and they go to the cross bench. Gunnar asked that mother and daughter whether they would say yes to this bargain.

They said they would find no fault with it, and Hallgerda betrothed her daughter. Then the places of the women were shifted again, and now Thorhalla sate between the brides. And now the feast sped on well, and when it was over, Hauskuld and his company ride west, but the men of Rangriver rode to their own abode. Gunnar gave many men gifts, and that made him much liked.

Hallgerda took the housekeeping under her, and stood up for her rights in word and deed. Thorgerda took to housekeeping at Gritwater, and was a good housewife.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE VISIT TO BERGTHORSKNOLL.

Now it was the custom between Gunnar and Njal, that each made the other a feast, winter and winter about, for friendship's sake; and it was Gunnar's turn to go to feast at Njal's. So Gunnar and Hallgerda set off for Bergthorsknoll, and when they got there Helgi and his wife were not at home. Njal gave Gunnar and his wife a hearty welcome, and when they had been there a little while, Helgi came home with Thorhalla his

wife. Then Bergthora went up to the cross-bench, and Thorhalla with her, and Bergthora said to Hallgerda—

"Thou shalt give place to this woman."

She answered—"To no one will I give place, for I will not be driven into the corner for any one."

"I shall rule here," said Bergthora. After that Thorhalla sat down, and Bergthora went round the table with water to wash the guests' hands. Then Hallgerda took hold of Bergthora's hand, and said—

"There's not much to choose, though, between you two. Thou hast hangnails on every finger, and Njal is beardless."

"That 's true," says Bergthora, "yet neither of us finds fault with the other for it; but Thorwald, thy husband, was not beardless, and yet thou plottedst his death."

Then Hallgerda said—"It stands me in little stead to have the bravest man in Iceland if thou dost not avenge this, Gunnar!"

He sprang up and strode across away from the board, and said—"Home I will go, and it were more seemly that thou shouldest wrangle with those of thine own household, and not under other men's roofs; but as for Njal, I am his debtor for much honour, and never will I be egged on by thee like a fool."

After that they set off home.

"Mind this, Bergthora," said Hallgerda, "that we shall meet again."

Bergthora said she should not be better off for that. Gunnar said nothing at all, but went home to Lithend, and was there at home all the winter. And now the summer was running on towards the Great Thing.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

KOL SLEW SWART.

GUNNAR rode away to the Thing, but before he rode from home he said to Hallgerda—"Be good now while I am away, and show none of thine ill temper in anything with which my friends have to do."

"The trolls take thy friends," says Hallgerda.

So Gunnar rode to the Thing, and saw it was not good to come to words with her. Njal rode to the Thing too, and all his sons with him.

Now it must be told of what tidings happened at home. Njal and Gunnar owned a wood in common at Redslip; they had not shared the wood, but each was wont to hew in it as he needed, and neither said a word to the other about that. Hallgerda's grieve's* name was Kol; he had been with her long, and

* Grieve, *i. e.*, bailiff, head workman.

was one of the worst of men. There was a man named Swart; he was Njal's and Bergthora's house-carle; they were very fond of him. Now Bergthora told him that he must go up into Redslip and hew wood; but she said—"I will get men to draw home the wood."

He said he would do the work she set him to win; and so he went up into Redslip, and was to be there a week.

Some gangrel men came to Lithend from the east across Markfleet, and said that Swart had been in Redslip, and hewn wood, and done a deal of work.

"So," says Hallgerda, "Bergthora must mean to rob me in many things, but I'll take care that he does not hew again."

Rannveig, Gunnar's mother, heard that, and said—"There have been good housewives before now, though they never set their hearts on manslaughter."

Now the night wore away, and early next morning Hallgerda came to speak to Kol, and said—"I have thought of some work for thee;" and with that she put weapons into his hands, and went on to say—"Fare thou to Redslip; there wilt thou find Swart."

"What shall I do to him?" he says.

"Askest thou that, when thou art the worst of men?" she says. "Thou shalt kill him."

"I can get that done," he says, "but 'tis more likely that I shall lose my own life for it."

"Everything grows big in thy eyes," she says, "and thou behavest ill to say this after I have spoken up for thee in everything. I must get another man to do this if thou darest not."

He took the axe, and was very wroth, and takes a horse that Gunnar owned, and rides now till he comes east of Markfleet. There he got off and bided in the wood, till they had carried down the firewood, and Swart was left alone behind. Then Kol sprang on him, and said—"More folk can hew great strokes than thou alone;" and so he laid the axe on his head, and smote him his death-blow, and rides home afterwards, and tells Hallgerda of the slaying.

She said—"I shall take such good care of thee, that no harm shall come to thee."

"May be so," says he, "but I dreamt all the other way as I slept ere I did the deed."

Now they come up into the wood, and find Swart slain, and bear him home. Hallgerda sent a man to Gunnar at the Thing to tell him of the slaying. Gunnar said no hard words at first of Hallgerda to the messenger, and men knew not at first whether he thought well or ill of it. A little after he stood up, and bade his

men go with him: they did so, and fared to Njal's booth. Gunnar sent a man to fetch Njal, and begged him to come out. Njal went out at once, and he and Gunnar fell a-talking, and Gunnar said—

"I have to tell thee of the slaying of a man, and my wife and my grieve Kol were those who did it; but Swart, thy house-carle, fell before them."

Njal held his peace while he told him the whole story. Then Njal spoke—

"Thou must take heed not to let her have her way in everything."

Gunnar said—"Thou thyself shalt settle the terms."

Njal spoke again—"'T will be hard work for thee to atone for all Hallgerda's mischief; and somewhere else there will be a broader trail to follow than this which we two now have a share in, and yet, even here there will be much awanting before all be well; and herein we shall need to bear in mind the friendly words that passed between us of old; and something tells me that thou wilt come well out of it, but still thou wilt be sore tried."

Then Njal took the award into his own hands from Gunnar, and said—

"I will not push this matter to the uttermost; thou shalt pay twelve ounces of silver; but I will add this to my award, that if anything happens from our homestead

about which thou hast to utter an award, thou wilt not be less easy in thy terms."

Gunnar paid up the money out of hand, and rode home afterwards. Njal, too, came home from the Thing, and his sons. Bergthora saw the money, and said—

"This is very justly settled; but even as much money shall be paid for Kol as time goes on."

Gunnar came home from the Thing and blamed Hallgerda. She said, better men lay unatoned in many places. Gunnar said, she might have her way in beginning a quarrel, "but how the matter is to be settled rests with me."

Hallgerda was for ever chattering of Swart's slaying, but Bergthora liked that ill. Once Njal and her sons went up to Thorolfsfell to see about the house-keeping there, but that selfsame day this thing happened when Bergthora was out of doors: she sees a man ride up to the house on a black horse. She stayed there and did not go in, for she did not know the man. That man had a spear in his hand, and was girded with a short sword. She asked this man his name.

"Atli is my name," says he.

She asked whence he came.

"I am an Eastfirther," he says.

"Whither shalt thou go?" she says.

"I am a homeless man," says he, "and I thought to see Njal and Skarphedinn, and know if they would take me in."

"What work is handiest to thee?" says she.

"I am a man used to field-work," he says, "and many things else come very handy to me; but I will not hide from thee that I am a man of hard temper, and it has been many a man's lot before now to bind up wounds at my hand."

"I do not blame thee," she says, "though thou art no milksop."

Atli said—"Hast thou any voice in things here?"

"I am Njal's wife," she says, "and I have as much to say to our housefolk as he."

"Wilt thou take me in then?" says he.

"I will give thee thy choice of that," says she. "If thou wilt do all the work that I set before thee, and that, though I wish to send thee where a man's life is at stake."

"Thou must have so many men at thy beck," says he, "that thou wilt not need me for such work."

"That I will settle as I please," she says.

"We will strike a bargain on these terms," says he.

Then she took him into the household. Njal and his sons came home and asked Bergthora what man that might be?

"He is thy house-carle," she says, "and I took him in." Then she went on to say he was no sluggard at work.

"He will be a great worker enough, I daresay," says Njal, "but I do not know whether he will be such a good worker."

Skarphedinn was good to Atli.

Njal and his sons ride to the Thing in the course of the summer; Gunnar was also at the Thing.

Njal took out a purse of money.

"What money is that, father?"

"Here is the money that Gunnar paid me for our house-carle last summer."

"That will come to stand thee in some stead," says Skarphedinn, and smiled as he spoke.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SLAYING OF KOL, WHOM ATLI SLEW.

Now we must take up the story and say, that Atli asked Bergthora what work he should do that day?

"I have thought of some work for thee," she says; "thou shalt go and look for Kol until thou find him; for now shalt thou slay him this very day, if thou wilt do my will."

"This work is well fitted," says Atli, "for each of us two are bad fellows; but still I will so lay myself out for him that one or other of us shall die."

"Well mayst thou fare," she says, "and thou shalt not do this deed for nothing."

He took his weapons and his horse, and rode up to Fleetlithe, and there met men who were coming down from Lithend. They were at home east in the Mark. They asked Atli whither he meant to go? He said he was riding to look for an old jade. They said that was a small errand for such a workman, "but still 'twould be better to ask those who have been about last night."

"Who are they?" says he.

"Killing-Kol," say they, "Hallgerda's house-carle, fared from the fold just now, and has been awake all night."

"I do not know whether I dare to meet him," says Atli, "he is bad-tempered, and may be that I shall let another's wound be my warning."

"Thou bearest that look beneath the brows as though thou wert no coward," they said, and showed him where Kol was.

Then he spurred his horse and rides fast, and when he meets Kol, Atli said to him—

"Go the pack-saddle bands well," says Atli.

"That's no business of thine, worthless fellow, nor of any one else whence thou comest."

Atli said—"Thou hast something behind that is earnest work, but that is to die."

After that Atli thrust at him with his spear, and struck him about his middle. Kol swept at him with his axe, but missed him, and fell off his horse, and died at once.

Atli rode till he met some of Hallgerda's workmen, and said, "Go ye up to the horse yonder, and look to Kol, for he has fallen off, and is dead."

"Hast thou slain him?" say they.

"Well, 'twill seem to Hallgerda as though he has not fallen by his own hand."

After that Atli rode home and told Bergthora; she thanked him for this deed, and for the words which he had spoken about it.

"I do not know," says he, "what Njal will think of this."

"He will take it well upon his hands," she says, "and I will tell thee one thing as a token of it, that he has carried away with him to the Thing the price of that thrall which we took last spring, and that money will now serve for Kol; but though peace be made thou must still be ware of thyself, for Hallgerda will keep no peace."

"Wilt thou send at all a man to Njal to tell him of the slaying?"

"I will not," she says, "I should like it better that Kol were unatoned."

Then they stopped talking about it.

Hallgerda was told of Kol's slaying, and of the words that Atli had said. She said Atli should be paid off for them. She sent a man to the Thing to tell Gunnar of Kol's slaying; he answered little or nothing, and sent a man to tell Njal. He too made no answer, but Skarphedinn said—

"Thralls are men of more mettle than of yore; they used to fly at each other and fight, and no one thought much harm of that; but now they will do naught but kill," and as he said this he smiled.

Njal pulled down the purse of money which hung up in the booth, and went out; his sons went with him to Gunnar's booth.

Skarphedinn said to a man who was in the doorway of the booth—

"Say thou to Gunnar that my father wants to see him."

He did so, and Gunnar went out at once and gave Njal a hearty welcome. After that they began to talk.

"'Tis ill done," says Njal, "that my housewife should

have broken the peace, and let thy house-carle be slain."

"She shall not have blame for that," says Gunnar.

"Settle the award thyself," says Njal.

"So I will do," says Gunnar, "and I value those two men at an even price, Swart and Kol. Thou shalt pay me twelve ounces in silver."

Njal took the purse of money and handed it to Gunnar. Gunnar knew the money, and saw it was the same that he had paid Njal. Njal went away to his booth, and they were just as good friends as before. When Njal came home, he blamed Bergthora; but she said she would never give way to Hallgerda. Hallgerda was very cross with Gunnar, because he had made peace for Kol's slaying. Gunnar told her he would never break with Njal or his sons, and she flew into a great rage; but Gunnar took no heed of that, and so they sat for that year, and nothing noteworthy happened.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE KILLING OF ATLI THE THRALL.

NEXT spring Njal said to Atli—"I wish that thou wouldst change thy abode to the east firths, so that Hallgerda may not put an end to thy life?"

"I am not afraid of that," says Atli, "and I will willingly stay at home if I have the choice."

"Still that is less wise," says Njal.

"I think it better to lose my life in thy house than to change my master; but this I will beg of thee, if I am slain, that a thrall's price shall not be paid for me."

"Thou shalt be atoned for as a free man; but perhaps Bergthora will make thee a promise which she will fulfil, that revenge, man for man, shall be taken for thee."

Then he made up his mind to be a hired servant there.

Now it must be told of Hallgerda that she sent a man west to Bearfirth, to fetch Brynjolf the Unruly, her kinsman. He was a base son of Swan, and he was one of the worst of men. Gunnar knew nothing about it. Hallgerda said he was well fitted to be a grieve. So Brynjolf came from the west, and Gunnar asked what he was to do there? He said he was going to stay there.

"Thou wilt not better our household," says Gunnar, "after what has been told me of thee, but I will not turn away any of Hallgerda's kinsmen, whom she wishes to be with her."

Gunnar said little, but was not unkind to him, and so things went on till the Thing. Gunnar rides to the Thing and Kolskegg rides too, and when they came to

the Thing they and Njal met, for he and his sons were at the Thing, and all went well with Gunnar and them.

Bergthora said to Atli—"Go thou up into Thorolfsfell and work there a week."

So he went up thither, and was there on the sly, and burnt charcoal in the wood.

Hallgerda said to Brynjolf—"I have been told Atli is not at home, and he must be winning work on Thorolfsfell."

"What thinkest thou likeliest that he is working at," says he.

"At something in the wood," she says.

"What shall I do to him?" he asks.

"Thou shalt kill him," says she.

He was rather slow in answering her, and Hallgerda said—

"'Twould grow less in Thiostolf's eyes to kill Atli if he were alive."

"Thou shalt have no need to goad me on much more," he says, and then he seized his weapons, and takes his horse and mounts, and rides to Thorolfsfell. There he saw a great reek of coalsmoke east of the homestead, so he rides thither, and gets off his horse and ties him up, but he goes where the smoke was thickest. Then he sees where the charcoal pit is, and a man stands

by it. He saw that he had thrust his spear in the ground by him. Brynjolf goes along with the smoke right up to him, but he was eager at his work, and saw him not. Brynjolf gave him a stroke on the head with his axe, and he turned so quick round that Brynjolf loosed his hold of the axe, and Atli grasped the spear, and hurled it after him. Then Brynjolf cast himself down on the ground, but the spear flew away over him.

"Lucky for thee that I was not ready for thee," says Atli, "but now Hallgerda will be well pleased, for thou wilt tell of her my death; but it is a comfort to know that thou wilt have the same fate soon; but come now take thy axe which has been here."

He answered him never a word, nor did he take the axe before he was dead. Then he rode up to the house on Thorolfsfell, and told of the slaying, and after that rode home and told Hallgerda. She sent men to Bergthorsknoll, and let them tell Bergthora, that now Kol's slaying was paid for.

After that Hallgerda sent a man to the Thing to tell Gunnar of Atli's killing.

Gunnar stood up, and Kolskegg with him, and Kolskegg said—

"Unthrifty will Hallgerda's kinsmen be to thee."

Then they go to see Njal, and Gunnar said—

"I have to tell thee of Atli's killing." He told him also who slew him, and went on, "and now I will bid thee atonement for the deed, and thou shalt make the award thyself."

Njal said—"We two have always meant never to come to strife about anything; but still I cannot make him out a thrall."

Gunnar said that was all right, and stretched out his hand.

Njal named his witnesses, and they made peace on those terms.

Skarphedinn said, "Hallgerda does not let our house-carles die of old age."

Gunnar said—"Thy mother will take care that blow goes for blow between the houses."

"Ay, ay," says Njal, "there will be enough of that work."

After that Njal fixed the price at a hundred in silver, but Gunnar paid it down at once. Many who stood by said that the award was high; Gunnar got wroth, and said that a full atonement was often paid for those who were no brisker men than Atli.

With that they rode home from the Thing.

Bergthora said to Njal when she saw the money—"Thou thinkest thou hast fulfilled thy promise, but now my promise is still behind."

"There is no need that thou shouldst fulfil it," says Njal.

"Nay," says she, "thou hast guessed it would be so; and so it shall be."

Hallgerda said to Gunnar—

"Hast thou paid a hundred in silver for Atli's slaying, and made him a free man?"

"He was free before," says Gunnar, "and besides, I will not make Njal's household outlaws who have forfeited their rights."

"There's not a pin to choose between you," she said, "for both of you are so blate?"

"That's as things prove," says he.

Then Gunnar was for a long time very short with her, till she gave way to him; and now all was still for the rest of that year; in the spring Njal did not increase his household, and now men ride to the Thing about summer.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SLAYING OF BRYNJOLF THE UNRULY.

THERE was a man named Thord, he was surnamed Freedmanson. Sigtrygg was his father's name, and he had been the freedman of Asgerd, and he was drowned in Markfleet. That was why Thord was with Njal after-

wards. He was a tall man and a strong, and he had fostered all Njal's sons. He had set his heart on Gudfinna Thorolf's daughter, Njal's kinswoman; she was housekeeper at home there, and was then with child.

Now Bergthora came to talk with Thord Freedmanson; she said—

"Thou shalt go to kill Brynjolf, Hallgerda's kinsman."

"I am no man-slayer," he says, "but still I will do whatever thou wilt."

"This is my will," she says.

After that he went up to Lithend, and made them call Hallgerda out, and asked where Brynjolf might be.

"What's thy will with him," she says.

"I want him to tell me where he has hidden Atli's body; I have heard say that he has buried it badly."

She pointed to him and said he was down yonder in Acretongue.

"Take heed," says Thord, "that the same thing does not befall him as befell Atli."

"Thou art no manslayer," she says, "and so naught will come of it even if ye two do meet."

"Never have I seen man's blood, nor do I know how I should feel if I did," he says, and gallops out of the "town" and down to Acretongue.

Rannveig, Gunnar's mother, had heard their talk.

"Thou goadest his mind much, Hallgerda," she says, "but I think him a dauntless man, and that thy kinsman will find."

They met on the beaten way, Thord and Brynjolf; and Thord said—"Guard thee, Brynjolf, for I will do no dastard's deed by thee."

Brynjolf rode at Thord, and smote at him with his axe. He smote at him at the same time with his axe, and hewed in sunder the haft just above Brynjolf's hands, and then hewed at him at once a second time, and struck him on the collar-bone, and the blow went straight into his trunk. Then he fell from horseback, and was dead on the spot.

Thord met Hallgerda's herdsman, and gave out the slaying as done by his hand, and said where he lay, and bade him tell Hallgerda of the slaying. After that he rode home to Bergthorsknoll, and told Bergthora of the slaying, and other people too.

"Good luck go with thy hands," she said.

The herdsman told Hallgerda of the slaying; she was snappish at it, and said much ill would come of it, if she might have her way.

CHAPTER XL.

GUNNAR AND NJAL MAKE PEACE ABOUT BRYNJOLF'S SLAYING.

Now these tidings come to the Thing, and Njal made them tell him the tale thrice, and then he said—

"More men now become man-slayers than I weened."

Skarphedinn spoke—"That man, though, must have been twice fey," he says, "who lost his life by our foster-father's hand, who has never seen man's blood. And many would think that we brothers would sooner have done this deed with the turn of temper that we have."

"Scant space wilt thou have," says Njal, "ere the like befalls thee; but need will drive thee to it."

Then they went to meet Gunnar, and told him of the slaying. Gunnar spoke and said that was little man-scathe, "but yet he was a free man."

Njal offered to make peace at once, and Gunnar said yes, and he was to settle the terms himself. He made his award there and then, and laid it at one hundred in silver. Njal paid down the money on the spot, and they were at peace after that.

CHAPTER XLI.

SIGMUND COMES OUT TO ICELAND.

THERE was a man whose name was Sigmund. He was the son of Lambi, the son of Sighvat the Red. He was a great voyager, and a comely and a courteous man; tall too, and strong. He was a man of proud spirit, and a good skald, and well trained in most feats of strength. He was noisy and boisterous, and given to jibes and mocking. He made the land east in Hornfirth. Skiolld was the name of his fellow-traveller; he was a Swedish man, and ill to do with. They took horse and rode from the east out of Hornfirth, and did not draw bridle before they came to Lithend, in the Fleetlithe. Gunnar gave them a hearty welcome, for the bonds of kinship were close between them. Gunnar begged Sigmund to stay there that winter, and Sigmund said he would take the offer if Skiolld his fellow might be there too.

"Well, I have been so told about him," said Gunnar, "that he is no betterer of thy temper; but as it is, thou rather needest to have it bettered. This, too, is a bad house to stay at, and I would just give both of you a bit of advice, my kinsman, not to fire up at the egging

on of my wife Hallgerda; for she takes much in hand that is far from my will."

"His hands are clean who warns another," says Sigmund.

"Then mind the advice given thee," says Gunnar, "for thou art sure to be sore tried; and go along always with me, and lean upon my counsel."

After that they were in Gunnar's company. Hallgerda was good to Sigmund; and it soon came about that things grew so warm that she loaded him with money, and tended him no worse than her own husband; and many talked about that, and did not know what lay under it.

One day Hallgerda said to Gunnar—"It is not good to be content with that hundred in silver which thou tookest for my kinsman Brynjolf. I shall avenge him if I may," she says.

Gunnar said he had no mind to bandy words with her, and went away. He met Kolskegg, and said to him, "Go and see Njal; and tell him that Thord must be ware of himself though peace has been made, for, methinks, there is faithlessness somewhere."

He rode off and told Njal, but Njal told Thord, and Kolskegg rode home, and Njal thanked them for their faithfulness.

Once on a time they two were out in the "town," Njal

and Thord; a he-goat was wont to go up and down in the "town," and no one was allowed to drive him away. Then Thord spoke and said—

"Well, this *is* a wondrous thing!"

"What is it that thou see'st that seems after a wondrous fashion?" says Njal.

"Methinks the goat lies here in the hollow, and he is all one gore of blood."

Njal said that there was no goat there, nor anything else.

"What is it then?" says Thord.

"Thou must be a 'fey' man," says Njal, "and thou must have seen the fetch that follows thee, and now be ware of thyself."

"That will stand me in no stead," says Thord, "if death is doomed for me."

Then Hallgerda came to talk with Thrain Sigfus' son, and said,—"I would think thee my son-in-law indeed," she says, "if thou slayest Thord Freedmanson."

"I will not do that," he says, "for then I shall have the wrath of my kinsman Gunnar; and besides, great things hang on this deed, for this slaying would soon be avenged."

"Who will avenge it?" she asks; "is it the beardless carle?"

"Not so," says he; "his sons will avenge it."

After that they talked long and low, and no man knew what counsel they took together.

Once it happened that Gunnar was not at home, but those companions were. Thrain had come in from Grit-water, and then he and they and Hallgerda sat out of doors and talked. Then Hallgerda said—

"This have ye two brothers in arms, Sigmund and Skiolld, promised to slay Thord Freedmanson; but Thrain thou hast promised me that thou wouldst stand by them when they did the deed."

They all acknowledged that they had given her this promise.

"Now I will counsel you how to do it," she says: "Ye shall ride east into Hornfirth after your goods, and come home about the beginning of the Thing, but if ye are at home before it begins, Gunnar will wish that ye should ride to the Thing with him. Njal will be at the Thing and his sons and Gunnar, but then ye two shall slay Thord."

They all agreed that this plan should be carried out. After that they busked them east to the Firth, and Gunnar was not aware of what they were about, and Gunnar rode to the Thing. Njal sent Thord Freed-manson, away east under Eyjafell, and bade him be

away there one night. So he went east, but he could not get back from the east, for the Fleet had risen so high that it could not be crossed on horseback ever so far up. Njal waited for him one night, for he had meant him to have ridden with him; and Njal said to Bergthora, that she must send Thord to the Thing as soon as ever he came home. Two nights after, Thord came from the east, and Bergthora told him that he must ride to the Thing, "but first thou shalt ride up into Thorolfsfell and see about the farm there, and do not be there longer than one or two nights.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SLAYING OF THORD FREEDMANSON.

THEN Sigmund came from the east and those companions. Hallgerda told them that Thord was at home, but that he was to ride straightway to the Thing after a few nights' space. "Now ye will have a fair chance at him," he says, "but if this goes off, ye will never get nigh him." Men came to Lithend from Thorolfsfell, and told Hallgerda that Thord was there. Hallgerda went to Thrain Sigfus' son, and his companions, and said to him, "Now is Thord on Thorolfsfell, and now your best plan is to fall on him and kill him as he goes home."

"That we will do," says Sigmund. So they went out, and took their weapons and horses and rode on the way to meet him. Sigmund said to Thrain, "Now thou shalt have nothing to do with it; for we shall not need all of us."

"Very well, so I will," says he.

Then Thord rode up to them a little while after, and Sigmund said to him—

"Give thyself up," he says, "for now shalt thou die."

"That shall not be," says Thord, "come thou to single combat with me."

"That shall not be either," says Sigmund, "we will make the most of our numbers; but it is not strange that Skarphedinn is strong, for it is said that a fourth of a foster-child's strength comes from the foster-father.

"Thou wilt feel the force of that," says Thord, "for Skarphedinn will avenge me."

After that they fall on him, and he breaks a spear of each of them, so well did he guard himself. Then Skiolld cut off his hand, and he still kept them off with his other hand for some time, till Sigmund thrust him through. Then he fell dead to earth. They threw over him turf and stones; and Thrain said—"We have won an ill work, and Njal's sons will take this slaying ill when they hear of it."

They ride home and tell Hallgerda. She was glad to hear of the slaying, but Rannveig, Gunnar's mother, said—

"It is said 'but a short while is hand fain of blow,' and so it will be here; but still Gunnar will set thee free from this matter. But if Hallgerda makes thee take another fly in thy mouth, then that will be thy bane."

Hallgerda sent a man to Bergthorsknoll, to tell the slaying, and another man to the Thing, to tell it to Gunnar. Bergthora said she would not fight against Hallgerda with ill words about such a matter; "that," quoth she, "would be no revenge for so great a quarrel."

CHAPTER XLIII.

NJAL AND GUNNAR MAKE PEACE FOR THE SLAYING OF THORD.

BUT when the messenger came to the Thing to tell Gunnar of the slaying, then Gunnar said—

"This has happened ill, and no tidings could come to my ears which I should think worse; but yet we will now go at once and see Njal. I still hope he may take it well, though he be sorely tried."

So they went to see Njal, and called him to come out and talk to them. He went out at once to meet Gunnar, and they talked, nor were there any more men by at first than Kolskegg.

"Hard tidings have I to tell thee," says Gunnar; "the slaying of Thord Freedmanson, and I wish to offer thee selfdoom for the slaying."

Njal held his peace some while, and then said—

"That is well offered, and I will take it; but yet it is to be looked for, that I shall have blame from my wife or from my sons for that, for it will mislike them much; but still I will run the risk, for I know that I have to deal with a good man and true; nor do I wish that any breach should arise in our friendship on my part."

"Wilt thou let thy sons be by, pray?" says Gunnar. "I will not," says Njal, "for they will not break the peace which I make, but if they stand by while we make it, they will not pull well together with us."

"So it shall be," says Gunnar. "See thou to it alone."

Then they shook one another by the hand, and made peace well and quickly.

Then Njal said—"The award that I make is two hundred in silver, and that thou wilt think much."

"I do not think it too much," says Gunnar, and went home to his booth.

Njal's sons came home, and Skarphedinn asked whence that great sum of money came, which his father held in his hand.

Njal said—"I tell you of your foster-father's Thord's slaying, and we two, Gunnar and I, have now made peace in the matter, and he has paid an atonement for him as for two men."

"Who slew him?" says Skarphedinn.

"Sigmund and Skiolld, but Thrain was standing near too," says Njal.

"They thought they had need of much strength," says Skarphedinn, and sang a song.

"Bold in deeds of derring-do,
Burdeners of ocean's steeds,
Strength enough it seems they needed
All to slay a single man;
When shall we our hands uplift?
We who brandish burnished steel—
Famous men erst reddened weapons,
When? if now we quiet sit?"

"Yes! when shall the day come when we shall lift our hands?"

"That will not be long off," says Njal, "and then thou shalt not be baulked; but still, methinks, I set

great store on your not breaking this peace that I have made."

"Then we will not break it," says Skarphedinn, "but if anything arises between us, then we will bear in mind the old feud."

"Then I will ask you to spare no one," says Njal.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SIGMUND MOCKS NJAL AND HIS SONS.

Now men ride home from the Thing; and when Gunnar came home, he said to Sigmund—

"Thou art a more unlucky man than I thought, and turnest thy good gifts to thine own ill. But still I have made peace for thee with Njal and his sons; and now, take care that thou dost not let another fly come into thy mouth. Thou art not at all after my mind, thou goest about with jibes and jeers, with scorn and mocking; but that is not my turn of mind. That is why thou gettest on so well with Hallgerda, because ye two have your minds more alike."

Gunnar scolded him a long time, and he answered him well, and said he would follow his counsel more for the time to come than he had followed it hitherto. Gunnar told him then they might get on together.

Gunnar and Njal kept up their friendship though the rest of their people saw little of one another. It happened once that some gangrel women came to Lithend from Bergthorsknoll; they were great gossips and rather spiteful tongued. Hallgerda had a bower, and sate often in it, and there sate with her her daughter Thorgerda, and there too were Thrain and Sigmund, and a crowd of women. Gunnar was not there nor Kolskegg. These gangrel women went into the bower, and Hallgerda greeted them, and made room for them; then she asked them for news, but they said they had none to tell. Hallgerda asked where they had been overnight; they said at Bergthorsknoll.

"What was Njal doing?" she says.

"He was hard at work sitting still," they said.

"What were Njal's sons doing?" she says; "they think themselves men at any rate."

"Tall men they are in growth," they say, "but as yet they are all untried; Skarphedinn whetted an axe, Grim fitted a spearhead to the shaft, Helgi rivetted a hilt on a sword, Hauskuld strengthened the handle of a shield."

"They must be bent on some great deed," says Hallgerda.

"We do not know that," they say.

"What were Njal's house-carles doing?" she asks.

"We don't know what some of them were doing, but one was carting dung up the hill-side."

"What good was there in doing that?" she asks.

"He said it made the swathe better there than any where else," they reply. "Witless now is Njal," says Hallgerda, "though he knows how to give counsel on every thing."

"How so?" they ask.

"I will only bring forward what is true to prove it," says she; "why does'nt he make them cart dung over his beard that he may be like other men? Let us call him 'the beardless carle:' but his sons we will call 'dung-beardlings;' and now do pray give some stave about them, Sigmund, and let us get some good by thy gift of song."

"I am quite ready to do that," says he, and sang these verses,—

"Lady proud with hawk in hand,
Prithee why should dungbeard boys,
Reft of reason, dare to hammer
Handle fast on battle shield?
For these lads of loathly feature,—
Lady scattering swanbath's beams*—
Shall not shun this ditty shameful
Which I shape upon them now.

He the beardless carle shall listen
While I lash him with abuse,

* Swanbath's beams, periphrasis for gold.

Loon at whom our stomachs sicken,
Soon shall hear these words of scorn;
Far too nice for such base fellows
Is the name my bounty gives,
Eën my muse her help refuses,
Making mirth of dungbeard boys.

Here I find a nickname fitting
For those noisome dungbeard boys,—
Loath am I to break my bargain
Linked with such a noble man—
Knit we all our taunts together—
Known to me is mind of man—
Call we now with outburst common,
Him, that churl, the beardless carle."

"Thou art a jewel indeed," says Hallgerda; "how yielding thou art to what I ask!"

Just then Gunnar came in. He had been standing outside the door of the bower, and heard all the words that had passed. They were in a great fright when they saw him come in, and then all held their peace, but before there had been bursts of laughter.

Gunnar was very wroth, and said to Sigmund, "thou art a foolish man, and one that cannot keep to good advice, and thou revilest Njal's sons, and Njal himself who is most worth of all; and this thou doest in spite of what thou hast already done. Mind, this will be thy death. But if any man repeats these words that thou hast

spoken, or these verses that thou hast made, that man shall be sent away at once, and have my wrath beside."

But they were all so sore afraid of him, that no one dared to repeat those words. After that he went away, but the gangrel women talked among themselves, and said that they would get a reward from Bergthora if they told her all this. They went then away afterwards down thither, and took Bergthora aside and told her the whole story of their own free will.

Bergthora spoke and said, when men sate down to the board, "Gifts have been given to all of you, father and sons, and ye will be no true men unless ye repay them somehow."

"What gifts are these?" asks Skarphedinn.

"You, my sons," says Bergthora, "have got one gift between you all. Ye are nicknamed 'Dungbeardlings,' but my husband 'the beardless carle.'"

"Ours is no woman's nature," says Skarphedinn, "that we should fly into a rage at every little thing."

"And yet Gunnar was wroth for your sakes," says she, "and he is thought to be good-tempered. But if ye do not take vengeance for this wrong, ye will avenge no shame."

"The carline, our mother, thinks this fine sport," says Skarphedinn, and smiled scornfully as he spoke, but still

the sweat burst out upon his brow, and red flecks came over his cheeks, but that was not his wont. Grim was silent and bit his lip. Helgi made no sign, and he said never a word. Hauskuld went off with Bergthora; she came into the room again, and fretted and foamed much.

Njal spoke and said, "slow and sure," says the proverb, mistress! and so it is with many things, though they try men's tempers, that there are always two sides to a story, even when vengeance is taken."

But at even when Njal was come into his bed, he heard that an axe came against the panel and rang loudly, but there was another shut bed, and there the shields were hung up, and he sees that they are away. He said, "who have taken down our shields?"

"Thy sons went out with them," says Bergthora.

Njal pulled his shoes on his feet, and went out at once, and round to the other side of the house, and sees that they were taking their course right up the slope; he said, "whither away Skarphedinn?"

"To look after thy sheep," he answers.

"You would not then be armed," said Njal, "if you meant that, and your errand must be something else."

Then Skarphedinn sang a song,

"Squanderer of hoarded wealth,
Some there are that own rich treasure,

Ore of sea that clasps the earth,
And yet care to count their sheep;
Those who forge sharp songs of mocking,
Death songs, scarcely can possess
Sense of sheep that crop the grass;
Such as these I seek in fight;"

and said afterwards—

"We shall fish for salmon, father."

"'T would be well then if it turned out so that the prey does not get away from you."

They went their way, but Njal went to his bed, and he said to Bergthora, "Thy sons were out of doors all of them, with arms, and now thou must have egged them on to something.

"I will give them my heartfelt thanks," said Bergthora, "if they tell me the slaying of Sigmund."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SLAYING OF SIGMUND AND SKIOLLD.

Now they, Njal's sons, fare up to Fleetlithe, and were that night under the Lithe, and when the day began to break, they came near to Lithend. That same morning both Sigmund and Skiolld rose up and meant to go to the stud-horses; they had bits with them, and caught the horses

that were in the "town" and rode away on them. They found the stud-horses between two brooks. Skarphedinn caught sight of them, for Sigmund was in bright clothing. Skarphedinn said, "See you now the red elf yonder, lads?" They looked that way, and said they saw him.

Skarphedinn spoke again: "Thou, Hauskuld, shalt have nothing to do with it, for thou wilt often be sent about alone without due heed; but I mean Sigmund for myself; methinks that is like a man; but Grim and Helgi, they shall try to slay Skiolld."

Hauskuld sat him down, but they went until they came up to them. Skarphedinn said to Sigmund—

"Take thy weapons and defend thyself; that is more needful now, than to make mocking songs on me and my brothers."

Sigmund took up his weapons, but Skarphedinn waited the while. Skiolld turned against Grim and Helgi, and they fell hotly to fight. Sigmund had a helm on his head, and a shield at his side, and was girt with a sword, his spear was in his hand; now he turns against Skarphedinn, and thrusts at once at him with his spear, and the thrust came on his shield. Skarphedinn dashes the spearhaft in two, and lifts up his axe and hews at Sigmund, and cleaves his shield down to below

the handle. Sigmund drew his sword and cut at Skarphedinn, and the sword cuts into his shield, so that it stuck fast. Skarphedinn gave the shield such a quick twist, that Sigmund let go his sword. Then Skarphedinn hews at Sigmund with his axe; the "Ogress of war." Sigmund had on a corselet, the axe came on his shoulder. Skarphedinn cleft the shoulder-blade right through, and at the same time pulled the axe towards him. Sigmund fell down on both knees, but sprang up again at once.

"Thou hast lilted low to me already," says Skarphedinn, "but still thou shalt fall upon thy mother's bosom ere we two part."

"Ill is that then," says Sigmund.

Skarphedinn gave him a blow on his helm, and after that dealt Sigmund his death-blow.

Grim cut off Skiolld's foot at the ankle-joint, but Helgi thrust him through with his spear, and he got his death there and then.

Skarphedinn saw Hallgerda's shepherd, just as he had hewn off Sigmund's head; he handed the head to the shepherd, and bade him bear it to Hallgerda, and said she would know whether that head had made jeering songs about them, and with that he sang a song.

"Here! this head shalt thou, that heapest
Hoards from ocean-caverns won,*
Bear to Hallgerd with my greeting,
Her that hurries men to fight;
Sure am I, O firewood splitter!
That yon spendthrift knows it well,
And will answer if it ever
Uttered mocking songs on us."

The shepherd casts the head down as soon as ever they parted, for he dared not do so while their eyes were on him. They fared along till they met some men down by Markfleet, and told them the tidings. Skarphedinn gave himself out as the slayer of Sigmund; and Grim and Helgi as the slayers of Skiolld; then they fared home and told Njal the tidings. He answers them—

"Good luck to your hands! Here no self-doom will come to pass as things stand."

Now we must take up the story, and say that the shepherd came home to Lithend. He told Hallgerda the tidings.

"Skarphedinn put Sigmund's head into my hands," he says, "and bade me bring it thee; but I dared not do it, for I knew not how thou wouldst like that."

"'Twas ill that thou didst not do that," she says; "I would have brought it to Gunnar, and then he would

* "Thou, that heapest hoards," etc.—merely a periphrasis for man, and scarcely fitting, except in irony, to a splitter of firewood.

have avenged his kinsman, or have to bear every man's blame."

After that she went to Gunnar and said, "I tell thee of thy kinsman Sigmund's slaying: Skarphedinn slew him, and wanted them to bring me the head."

"Just what might be looked for to befall him," says Gunnar, "for ill redes bring ill luck, and both you and Skarphedinn have often done one another spiteful turns."

Then Gunnar went away; he let no steps be taken towards a suit for manslaughter, and did nothing about it. Hallgerda often put him in mind of it, and kept saying that Sigmund had fallen unatoned. Gunnar gave no heed to that.

Now three Things passed away, at each of which men thought that he would follow up the suit; then a knotty point came on Gunnar's hands, which he knew not how to set about, and then he rode to find Njal. He gave Gunnar a hearty welcome. Gunnar said to Njal, "I am come to seek a bit of good counsel at thy hands about a knotty point."

"Thou art worthy of it," says Njal, and gave him counsel what to do. Then Gunnar stood up and thanked him. Njal then spoke, and said, and took Gunnar by the hand, "Over long hath thy kinsman Sigmund been unatoned." "He has been long ago atoned," says Gun-

nar, "but still I will not fling back the honour offered me."

Gunnar had never spoken an ill word of Njal's sons. Njal would have nothing else than that Gunnar should make his own award in the matter. He awarded two hundred in silver, but let Skiolld fall without a price. They paid down all the money at once.

Gunnar declared this their atonement at the Thingskala Thing, when most men were at it, and laid great weight on the way in which they (Njal and his sons) had behaved; he told too those bad words which cost Sigmund his life, and no man was to repeat them or sing the verses, but if any sung them, the man who uttered them was to fall without atonement.

Both Gunnar and Njal gave each other their words that no such matters should ever happen that they would not settle among themselves; and this pledge was well kept ever after, and they were always friends.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OF GIZUR THE WHITE AND GEIR THE PRIEST.

THERE was a man named Gizur the White; he was Teit's son; Kettlebjörn the Old's son, of Mossfell.* Bishop

* Teit's mother's name was Helga. She was a daughter of

Isleif was Gizur's son. Gizur the White kept house at Mossfell, and was a great chief. That man is also named in this story, whose name was Geir the priest; his mother was Thorkatla, another daughter of Kettlebjörn the Old of Mossfell. Geir kept house at Lithe. He and Gizur backed one another in every matter. At that time Mord Valgard's son kept house at Hof on the Rangrivervales; he was crafty and spiteful. Valgard his father was then abroad, but his mother was dead. He was very envious of Gunnar of Lithend. He was wealthy, so far as goods went, but had not many friends.

CHAPTER XLVII.

OF OTKELL IN KIRKBY.

THERE was a man named Otkell; he was the son of Skarf, the son of Hallkell, who fought with Grim of Grimsness, and felled him on the holm.* This Hallkell and Kettlebjörn the Old were brothers.

Thord Longbeard, who was the son of Hrapp, who was son of Bjorn the rough-footed, who was the son of Grim, the Lord of Sogn in Norway. Gizur's mother's name was Olof. She was a daughter of Lord Baudvar, Viking-Kari's son.

* That is, slew him in a duel.

Otkell kept house at Kirkby; his wife's name was Thorgerda; she was a daughter of Mar, the son of Runolf, the son of Naddad of the Faroe isles. Otkell was wealthy in goods. His son's name was Thorgeir; he was young in years, and a bold dashing man.

Skamkell was the name of another man; he kept house at another farm called Hof;* he was well off for money, but he was a spiteful man and a liar; quarrelsome too, and ill to deal with. He was Otkell's friend. Hallkell was the name of Otkell's brother; he was a tall strong man, and lived there with Otkell; their brother's name was Hallbjorn the White; he brought out to Iceland a thrall, whose name was Malcolm; he was Irish, and had not many friends.

Hallbjorn went to stay with Otkell, and so did his thrall Malcolm. The thrall was always saying that he should think himself happy if Otkell owned him. Otkell was kind to him, and gave him a knife and belt, and a full suit of clothes, but the thrall turned his hand to any work that Otkell wished.

Otkell wanted to make a bargain with his brother for the thrall; he said he would give him the thrall, but said too, that he was a worse treasure than he thought. But as soon as Otkell owned the thrall, then he did less

* Mord Valgard's son lived at the other farm called Hof.

and less work. Otkell often said outright to Hallbjorn, that he thought the thrall did little work; and he told Otkell that there was worse in him yet to come.

At that time came a great scarcity, so that men fell short both of meat and hay, and that spread over all parts of Iceland. Gunnar shared his hay and meat with many men; and all got them who came thither, so long as his stores lasted. At last it came about that Gunnar himself fell short both of hay and meat. Then Gunnar called on Kolskegg to go along with him; he called too on Thrain Sigfus' son, and Lambi Sigurd's son. They fared to Kirkby, and called Otkell out. He greeted them, and Gunnar said, "It so happens that I am come to deal with thee for hay and meat, if there be any left."

Otkell answers, "There is store of both, but I will sell thee neither."

"Wilt thou give me them then," says Gunnar, "and run the risk of my paying thee back somehow?"

"I will not do that either," says Otkell.

Skamkell all the while was giving him bad counsel.

Then Thrain Sigfus' son, said, "It would serve him right if we take both hay and meat and lay down the worth of them instead."

Skamkell answered, "All the men of Mossfell must

be dead and gone then, if ye, sons of Sigfus, are to come and rob them."

"I will have no hand in any robbery," says Gunnar.

"Wilt thou buy a thrall of me?" says Otkell.

"I'll not spare to do that," says Gunnar. After that Gunnar bought the thrall, and fared away as things stood.

Njal hears of this, and said, "Such things are ill done, to refuse to let Gunnar buy; and it is not a good outlook for others if such men as he cannot get what they want."

"What's the good of thy talking so much about such a little matter," says Bergthora; "far more like a man would it be to let him have both meat and hay, when thou lackest neither of them."

"That is clear as day," says Njal, "and I will of a surety supply his need somewhat."

Then he fared up to Thorolfsfell, and his sons with him, and they bound hay on fifteen horses; but on five horses they had meat. Njal came to Lithend, and called Gunnar out. He greeted them kindly.

"Here is hay and meat" said Njal, "which I will give thee; and my wish is, that thou shouldst never look to any one else than to me if thou standest in need of any thing."

"Good are thy gifts," says Gunnar, "but methinks thy friendship is still more worth, and that of thy sons."

After that Njal fared home, and now the spring passes away.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HOW HALLGERDA MAKES MALCOLM STEAL FROM KIRKBY.

Now Gunnar is about to ride to the Thing, but a great crowd of men from the Side* east turned in as guests at his house.

Gunnar bade them come and be his guests again, as they rode back from the Thing; and they said they would do so.

Now they ride to the Thing, and Njal and his sons were there. That Thing was still and quiet.

Now we must take up the story, and say that Hallgerda comes to talk with Malcolm the thrall.

"I have thought of an errand to send thee on," she says; "thou shalt go to Kirkby."

"And what shall I do there?" he says.

* That is, from the sea-side or shore, the long narrow strip of habitable land between the mountains and the sea in the south-east of Iceland.

"Thou shalt steal from thence food enough to load two horses, and mind and have butter and cheese; but thou shalt lay fire in the storehouse, and all will think that it has arisen out of heedlessness, but no one will think that there has been theft."

"Bad have I been," said the thrall, "but never have I been a thief."

"Hear a wonder!" says Hallgerda, "thou makest thyself good, thou that hast been both thief and murderer; but thou shalt not dare to do aught else than go, else will I let thee be slain."

He thought he knew enough of her to be sure that she would so do if he went not; so he took at night two horses and laid packsaddles on them, and went his way to Kirkby. The house-dog knew him and did not bark at him, and ran and fawned on him. After that he went to the storehouse and loaded the two horses with food out of it, but the storehouse he burnt, and the dog he slew.

He went up along by Rangriver, and his shoe-thong snapped; so he takes his knife and makes the shoe right, but he leaves the knife and belt lying there behind him.

He fares till he comes to Lithend; then he misses the knife, but dares not to go back.

Now he brings Hallgerda the food, and she showed herself well pleased at it.

Next morning when men came out of doors at Kirkby there they saw great scathe. Then a man was sent to the Thing to tell Otkell, he bore the loss well, and said it must have happened because the kitchen was next to the storehouse; and all thought that that was how it happened.

Now men ride home from the Thing, and many rode to Lithend. Hallgerda set food on the board, and in came cheese and butter. Gunnar knew that such food was not to be looked for in his house, and asked Hallgerda whence it came?

"Thence," she says; "whence thou mightest well eat of it; besides, it is no man's business to trouble himself with housekeeping."

Gunnar got wroth and said, "Ill indeed is it if I am a partaker with thieves;" and with that he gave her a slap on the cheek.

She said she would bear that slap in mind and repay it if she could.

So she went off and he went with her, and then all that was on the board was cleared away, but flesh-meat was brought in instead, and all thought that was because the flesh was thought to have been got in a better way.

Now the men who had been at the Thing fare away.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OF SKAMKELL'S EVIL COUNSEL.

Now we must tell of Skamkell. He rides after some sheep up along Rangriver, and he sees something shining in the path. He finds a knife and belt, and thinks he knows both of them. He fares with them to Kirkby; Otkell was out of doors when Skamkell came. He spoke to him and said,—

"Knowest thou aught of these pretty things?"

"Of a surety," says Otkell, "I know them."

"Who owns them?" asks Skamkell.

"Malcolm the thrall," says Otkell.

"Then more shall see and know them than we two," says Skamkell, "for true will I be to thee in counsel."

They showed them to many men, and all knew them. Then Skamkell said,—

"What counsel wilt thou now take?"

"We shall go and see Mord Valgard's son," answers Otkell, "and seek counsel of him."

So they went to Hof, and showed the pretty things to Mord, and asked him if he knew them?

He said he knew them well enough, but what was there in that? "Do you think you have a right to look for anything at Lithend?"

"We think it hard for us," says Skamkell, "to know what to do, when such mighty men have a hand in it."

"That is so, sure enough," says Mord, "but yet I will get to know those things out of Gunnar's household, which none of you will ever know."

"We would give thee money," they say, "if thou wouldst search out this thing."

"That money I shall buy full dear," answered Mord, "but still, perhaps, it may be that I will look at the matter."

They gave him three marks of silver for lending them his help.

Then he gave them this counsel, that women should go about from house to house with small wares, and give them to the housewives, and mark what was given them in return.

"For," he says, "'tis the turn of mind of all men first to give away what has been stolen, if they have it in their keeping, and so it will be here also, if this hath happened by the hand of man. Ye shall then come and show me what has been given to each in each house, and I shall

then be free from farther share in this matter, if the truth comes to light."

To this they agreed, and went home afterwards.

Mord sends women about the country, and they were away half a month. Then they came back, and had big bundles. Mord asked where they had most given them?

They said that at Lithend most was given them, and Hallgerda had been most bountiful to them.

He asked what was given them there?

"Cheese," say they.

He begged to see it, and they showed it to him, and it was in great slices. These he took and kept.

A little after, Mord fared to see Otkell, and bade that he would bring Thorgerda's cheese-mould; and when that was done, he laid the slices down in it, and lo! they fitted the mould in every way.

Then they saw, too, that a whole cheese had been given to them.

Then Mord said, "Now may ye see that Hallgerda must have stolen the cheese;" and they all passed the same judgment; and then Mord said, that now he thought he was free of this matter.

After that they parted.

Shortly after Kolskegg fell to talking with Gunnar, and said,—

"Ill is it to tell, but the story is in every man's mouth, that Hallgerda must have stolen, and that she was at the bottom of all that great scathe that befell at Kirkby."

Gunnar said that he too thought that must be so. "But what is to be done now?"

Kolskegg answered, "Thou wilt think it thy most bounden duty to make atonement for thy wife's wrong, and methinks it were best that thou farest to see Otkell, and makest him a handsome offer."

"This is well spoken," says Gunnar, "and so it shall be."

A little after Gunnar sent after Thrain Sigfus' son, and Lambi Sigurd's son, and they came at once.

Gunnar told them whither he meant to go, and they were well pleased. Gunnar rode with eleven men to Kirkby, and called Otkell out. Skamkell was there too, and said, "I will go out with thee, and it will be best now to have the balance of wit on thy side. And I would wish to stand closest by thee when thou needest it most, and now this will be put to the proof. Methinks it were best that thou puttest on an air of great weight.

Then they, Otkell and Skamkell, and Hallkell and Hallbjorn, went out all of them.

They greeted Gunnar, and he took their greeting well. Otkell asks whither he meant to go?

"No farther than here," says Gunnar, "and my errand hither is to tell thee about that bad mishap—how it arose from the plotting of my wife and that thrall whom I bought from thee."

"'Tis only what was to be looked for," says Hallbjorn.

"Now I will make thee a good offer," says Gunnar, "and the offer is this, that the best men here in the country round settle the matter."

"This is a fair-sounding offer," said Skamkell, "but an unfair and uneven one. Thou art a man who has many friends among the householders, but Otkell has not many friends."

"Well" says Gunnar, "then I will offer thee that I shall make an award, and utter it here on this spot, and so we will settle the matter, and my good-will shall follow the settlement. But I will make thee an atonement by paying twice the worth of what was lost."

"This choice shalt thou not take," said Skamkell; "and it is unworthy to give up to him the right to make his own award, when thou oughtest to have kept it for thyself."

So Otkell said, "I will not give up to thee, Gunnar, the right to make thine own award."

"I see plainly," said Gunnar, "the help of men who will be paid off for it one day I daresay; but come now, utter an award for thyself,"

Otkell leant toward Skamkell and said, "What shall I answer now?"

"This thou shalt call a good offer, but still put thy suit into the hands of Gizur the white, and Geir the priest, and then many will say this, that thou behavest like Hallkell, thy grandfather, who was the greatest of champions."

"Well offered is this, Gunnar," said Otkell, "but still my will is thou wouldst give me time to see Gizur the white."

"Do now whatever thou likest in the matter," said Gunnar; "but men will say this, that thou couldst not see thine own honour when thou wouldst have none of the choices I offer thee."

Then Gunnar rode home, and when he had gone away, Hallbjorn said, "Here I see how much man differs from man. Gunnar made thee good offers, but thou wouldst take none of them; or how dost thou think to strive with Gunnar in a quarrel, when no one is his match in fight. But now he is still so kind-hearted a man that it may be he will let these offers stand, though thou art only ready to take them afterwards. Methinks

it were best that thou farest to see Gizur the white and Geir the priest now this very hour."

Otkell let them catch his horse, and made ready in every way. Otkell was not sharpsighted, and Skamkell walked on the way along with him, and said to Otkell—

"Methought it strange that thy brother would not take this toil from thee, and now I will make thee an offer to fare instead of thee, for I know that the journey is irksome to thee."

"I will take that offer," says Otkell, "but mind and be as truthful as ever thou canst."

"So it shall be," says Skamkell.

Then Skamkell took his horse and cloak, but Otkell walks home.

Hallbjorn was out of doors, and said to Otkell—

"Ill is it to have a thrall for one's bosom friend, and we shall rue this for ever that thou hast turned back, and it is an unwise step to send the greatest liar on an errand, of which one may so speak that men's lives hang on it."

"Thou wouldst be sore afraid," says Otkell, "if Gunnar had his bill aloft, when thou art so scared now."

"No one knows who will be most afraid then," said Hallbjorn; "but this thou wilt have to own, that Gunnar

does not lose much time in brandishing his bill when he is wroth."

"Ah!" said Otkell, "ye are all of you for yielding but Skamkell."

And then they were both wroth.

CHAPTER L.

OF SKAMKELL'S LYING.

SKAMKELL came to Mossfell, and repeated all the offers to Gizur.

"It so seems to me," says Gizur, "as though these have been bravely offered; but why took he not these offers?"

"The chief cause was," answers Skamkell, "that all wished to show thee honour, and that was why he waited for thy utterance; besides, that is best for all."

So Skamkell stayed there the night over, but Gizur sent a man to fetch Geir the priest; and he came there early. Then Gizur told him the story and said—

"What course is to be taken now?"

"As thou no doubt hast already made up thy mind —to make the best of the business for both sides."

"Now we will let Skamkell tell his tale a second time, and see how he repeats it."

So they did that, and Gizur said—

"Thou must have told this story right; but still I have seen thee to be the wickedest of men, and there is no faith in faces if thou turnest out well."

Skamkell fared home, and rides first to Kirkby and calls Otkell out. He greets Skamkell well, and Skamkell brought him the greeting of Gizur and Geir.

"But about this matter of the suit," he says, "there is no need to speak softly, how that it is the will of both Gizur and Geir that this suit should not be settled in a friendly way. They gave that counsel that a summons should be set on foot, and that Gunnar should be summoned for having partaken of the goods, but Hallgerda for stealing them."

"It shall be done," said Otkell, "in everything as they have given counsel."

"They thought most of this," says Skamkell, "that thou hadst behaved so proudly; but as for me, I made as great a man of thee in everything as I could."

Now Otkell tells all this to his brothers, and Hallbjorn said—

"This must be the biggest lie."

Now the time goes on until the last of the summoning days before the Althing came.

Then Otkell called on his brothers and Skamkell to ride on the business of the summons to Lithend.

Hallbjorn said he would go, but said also that they would rue this summoning as time went on.

Now they rode twelve of them together to Lithend, but when they came into the "town," there was Gunnar out of doors, and knew naught of their coming till they had ridden right up to the house.

He did not go in-doors then, and Otkell thundered out the summons there and then; but when they had made an end of the summoning Skamkell said—

"Is it all right, master?"

"Ye know that best;" says Gunnar, "but I will put thee in mind of this journey one of these days, and of thy good help."

"That will not harm us," says Skamkell, "if thy bill be not aloft."

Gunnar was very wroth and went in-doors, and told Kolskegg, and Kolskegg said—

"Ill was it that we were not out of doors; they should have come here on the most shameful journey, if we had been by."

"Everything bides its time," says Gunnar; "but this journey will not turn out to their honour."

A little after Gunnar went and told Njal.

"Let it not worry thee a jot," said Njal, "for this will be the greatest honour to thee, ere this Thing comes to an end. As for us, we will all back thee with counsel and force."

Gunnar thanked him and rode home.

Otkell rides to the Thing, and his brothers with him and Skamkell.

CHAPTER LI.

OF GUNNAR.

GUNNAR rode to the Thing and all the sons of Sigfus; Njal and his sons too, they all went with Gunnar; and it was said that no band was so well knit and hardy as theirs.

Gunnar went one day to the booth of the Dalemen; Hrut was by the booth and Hauskuld, and they greeted Gunnar well. Now Gunnar tells them the whole story of the suit up to that time.

"What counsel gives Njal?" asks Hrut.

"He bade me seek you brothers," says Gunnar, "and said he was sure that he and you would look at the matter in the same light."

"He wishes then," says Hrut, "that I should say

what I think for kinship's sake; and so it shall be. Thou shalt challenge Gizur the white to combat on the island, if they do not leave the whole award to thee; but Kolskegg shall challenge Geir the priest. As for Otkell and his crew, men must be got ready to fall on them; and now we have such great strength all of us together, that thou mayst carry out whatever thou wilt."

Gunnar went home to his booth and told Njal.

"Just what I looked for," said Njal.

Wolf Aurpriest got wind of this plan, and told Gizur, and Gizur said to Otkell—

"Who gave thee that counsel that thou shouldst summon Gunnar?"

"Skamkell told me that was the counsel of both Geir the priest and thyself."

"But where is that scoundrel?" says Gizur, "who has thus lied."

"He lies sick up at our booth," says Otkell.

"May he never rise from his bed," says Gizur. "Now we must all go to see Gunnar, and offer him the right to make his own award; but I know not whether he will take that now."

Many men spoke ill of Skamkell, and he lay sick all through the Thing.

Gizur and his friends went to Gunnar's booth; their

coming was known, and Gunnar was told as he sat in his booth, and then they all went out and stood in array.

Gizur the white came first, and after a while he spoke and said—

"This is our offer—that thou, Gunnar, makest thine own award in this suit."

"Then," says Gunnar, "it was no doubt far from thy counsel that I was summoned."

"I gave no such counsel," says Gizur, "neither I nor Geir."

"Then thou must clear thyself of this charge by fitting proof."

"What proof dost thou ask?" says Gizur.

"That thou takest an oath," says Gunnar.

"That I will do," says Gizur, "if thou wilt take the award into thine own hands."

"That was the offer I made a while ago," says Gunnar; "but now, methinks, I have a greater matter to pass judgment on."

"It will not be right to refuse to make thine own award," said Njal; "for the greater the matter, the greater the honour in making it."

"Well," said Gunnar, "I will do this to please my friends, and utter my award; but I give Otkell this bit of advice, never to give me cause for quarrel hereafter."

Then Hrut and Hauskuld were sent for, and they came thither, and then Gizur the white and Geir the priest took their oaths; but Gunnar made his award, and spoke with no man about it, and afterwards he uttered it as follows:—

"This is my award," he says; "first, I lay it down that the storehouse must be paid for, and the food that was therein; but for the thrall, I will pay thee no fine, for that thou hiddest his faults; but I award him back to thee; for as the saying is, 'Birds of a feather flock most together.' Then, on the other hand, I see that thou hast summoned me in scorn and mockery, and for that I award to myself no less a sum than what the house that was burnt and the stores in it were worth; but if ye think it better that we be not set at one again, then I will let you have your choice of that, but if so I have already made up my mind what I shall do, and then I will fulfil my purpose."

"What we ask," said Gizur, "is that thou shouldst not be hard on Otkell, but we beg this of thee, on the other hand, that thou wouldst be his friend."

"That shall never be," said Gunnar, "so long as I live; but he shall have Skamkell's friendship; on that he has long leant.

"Well," answers Gizur, "we will close with thee

in this matter, though thou alone layest down the terms."

Then all this atonement was made and hands were shaken on it, and Gunnar said to Otkell—

"It were wiser to go away to thy kinsfolk; but if thou wilt be here in this country, mind that thou givest me no cause of quarrel."

"That is wholesome counsel," said Gizur; "and so he shall do."

So Gunnar had the greatest honour from that suit, and afterwards men rode home from the Thing.

Now Gunnar sits in his house at home, and so things are quiet for a while.

CHAPTER LII.

OF RUNOLF, THE SON OF WOLF AURPRIEST.

THERE was a man named Runolf, the son of Wolf Aurpriest, he kept house at the Dale, east of Markfleet. He was Otkell's guest once when he rode from the Thing. Otkell gave him an ox, all black, without a spot of white, nine winters old. Runolf thanked him for the gift, and bade him come and see him at home whenever he chose to go; and this bidding stood over for some

while, so that he had not paid the visit. Runolf often sent men to him and put him in mind that he ought to come; and he always said he would come, but never went.

Now Otkell had two horses, dun coloured, with a black stripe down the back; they were the best steeds to ride in all the country round, and so fond of each other, that whenever one went before, the other ran after him.

There was an Easterling staying with Otkell, whose name was Audulf; he had set his heart on Signy Otkell's daughter. Audulf was a tall man in growth, and strong.

CHAPTER LIII.

HOW OTKELL RODE OVER GUNNAR.

It happened next spring that Otkell said that they would ride east to the Dale, to pay Runolf a visit, and all showed themselves well pleased at that. Skamkell and his two brothers, and Audulf and three men more, went along with Otkell. Otkell rode one of the dun horses, but the other ran loose by his side. They shaped their course east towards Markfleet; and now Otkell

gallops ahead, and now the horses race against each other, and they break away from the path up towards the Fleetlithe.

Now, Otkell goes faster than he wished, and it happened that Gunnar had gone away from home out of his house all alone; and he had a corn-sieve in one hand, but in the other a hand-axe. He goes down to his seed field and sows his corn there, and had laid his cloak of fine stuff and his axe down by his side, and so he sows the corn a while.

Now, it must be told how Otkell rides faster than he would. He had spurs on his feet, and so he gallops down over the ploughed field, and neither of them sees the other; and just as Gunnar stands upright, Otkell rides down upon him, and drives one of the spurs into Gunnar's ear, and gives him a great gash, and it bleeds at once much.

Just then Otkell's companions rode up.

"Ye may see, all of you," says Gunnar, "that thou hast drawn my blood, and it is unworthy to go on so. First thou hast summoned me, but now thou treadest me under foot, and ridest over me."

Skamkell said, "Well it was no worse, master, but thou wast not one whit less wroth at the Thing, when thou tookest the selfdoom and clutchedst thy bill."

Gunnar said, "When we two next meet thou shalt see the bill." After that they part thus, and Skamkell shouted out and said, "Ye ride hard, lads!"

Gunnar went home, and said never a word to any one about what had happened, and no one thought that this wound could have come by man's doing.

It happened, though, one day, that he told it to his brother Kolskegg, and Kolskegg said—

"This thou shalt tell to more men, so that it may not be said that thou layest blame on dead men; for it will be gainsaid if witnesses do not know beforehand what has passed between you."

Then Gunnar told it to his neighbours, and there was little talk about it at first.

Otkell comes east to the Dale, and they get a hearty welcome there, and sit there a week.

Skamkell told Runolf all about their meeting with Gunnar, and how it had gone off; and one man happened to ask how Gunnar behaved.

"Why," said Skamkell, "if it were a low-born man it would have been said that he had wept."

"Such things are ill spoken," says Runolf, "and when ye two next meet, thou wilt have to own that there is no voice of weeping in his frame of mind; and it will be well if better men have not to pay for

thy spite. Now it seems to me best when ye wish to go home that I should go with you, for Gunnar will do me no harm."

"I will not have that," says Otkell; "but I will ride across the Fleet lower down."

Runolf gave Otkell good gifts, and said they should not see one another again.

Otkell bade him then to bear his sons in mind if things turned out so.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FIGHT AT RANGRIVER.

Now we must take up the story, and say that Gunnar was out of doors at Lithend, and sees his shepherd galloping up to the yard. The shepherd rode straight into the "town;" and Gunnar said, "Why ridest thou so hard?"

"I would be faithful to thee," said the man; "I saw men riding down along Markfleet, eight of them together, and four of them were in coloured clothes."

Gunnar said, "That must be Otkell."

The lad said, "I have often heard many temper-trying words of Skamkell's; for Skamkell spoke away there East at Dale, and said that thou sheddest tears

when they rode over thee; but I tell it thee because I cannot bear to listen to such speeches of worthless men."

"We must not be word-sick," says Gunnar, "but from this day forth thou shall do no other work than what thou choosest for thyself."

"Shall I say aught of this to Kolskegg thy brother?" asked the shepherd.

"Go thou and sleep," says Gunnar; "I will tell Kolskegg."

The lad laid him down and fell asleep at once, but Gunnar took the shepherd's horse and laid his saddle on him; he took his shield, and girded him with his sword, Oliver's gift; he sets his helm on his head; takes his bill, and something sung loud in it, and his mother, Rannveig, heard it. She went up to him and said "Wrathful art thou now, my son, and never saw I thee thus before."

Gunnar goes out, and drives the butt of his spear into the earth, and throws himself into the saddle, and rides away.

His mother, Rannveig, went into the sitting-room, where there was a great noise of talking.

"Ye speak loud," she says, "but yet the bill gave a louder sound when Gunnar went out."

Kolskegg heard what she said, and spoke, "This betokens no small tidings."

"That is well," says Hallgerda, "now they will soon prove whether he goes away from them weeping."

Kolskegg takes his weapons and seeks him a horse, and rides after Gunnar as fast as he could.

Gunnar rides across Acretongue, and so to Geilastofna, and thence to Rangriver, and down the stream to the ford at Hof. There were some women at the milking-post there. Gunnar jumped off his horse and tied him up. By this time the others were riding up towards him; there were flat stones covered with mud in the path that led down to the ford.

Gunnar called out to them and said, "Now is the time to guard yourselves; here now is the bill, and here now ye will put it to the proof whether I shed one tear for all of you."

Then they all of them sprang off their horses' backs and made towards Gunnar. Hallbjorn was the foremost.

"Do not thou come on," says Gunnar; "thee last of all would I harm; but I will spare no one if I have to fight for my life."

"That I cannot do," says Hallbjorn; "thou wilt strive to kill my brother for all that, and it is a shame if I sit

idly by." And as he said this he thrust at Gunnar with a great spear which he held in both hands.

Gunnar threw his shield before the blow, but Hallbjorn pierced the shield through. Gunnar thrust the shield down so hard that it stood fast in the earth,* but he brandished his sword so quickly that no eye could follow it, and he made a blow with the sword, and it fell on Hallbjorn's arm above the wrist, so that it cut it off.

Skamkell ran behind Gunnar's back and makes a blow at him with a great axe. Gunnar turned short round upon him and parries the blow with the bill, and caught the axe under one of its horns with such a wrench that it flew out of Skamkell's hand away into the river.

Then Gunnar sang a song.

"Once thou askedst, foolish fellow,
Of this man, this seahorse racer,
When as fast as feet could foot it
Forth ye fled from farm of mine,
Whether that were rightly summoned?
Now with gore the spear we redden,
Battle-eager, and avenge us
Thus on thee, vile source of strife."

Gunnar gives another thrust with his bill, and through

* This shews that the shields were oblong, running down to a point.

Skamkell, and lifts him up and casts him down in the muddy path on his head.

Audulf the Easterling snatches up a spear and launches it at Gunnar. Gunnar caught the spear with his hand in the air, and hurled it back at once, and it flew through the shield and the Easterling too, and so down into the earth.

Otkell smites at Gunnar with his sword, and aims at his leg just below the knee, but Gunnar leapt up into the air and he misses him. Then Gunnar thrusts at him the bill, and the blow goes through him.

Then Kolskegg comes up, and rushes at once at Hallkell and dealt him his death-blow with his short sword. There and then they slay eight men.

A woman who saw all this, ran home and told Mord, and besought him to part them.

"They alone will be there," he says, "of whom I care not though they slay one another."

"Thou canst not mean to say that," she says, "for thy kinsman Gunnar, and thy friend Otkell will be there."

"Baggage that thou art," he says, "thou art always chattering," and so he lay still in-doors while they fought.

Gunnar and Kolskegg rode home after this work,

and they rode hard up along the river bank, and Gunnar leapt off his horse and came down on his feet.

Then Kolskegg said, "Hard now thou ridest, brother!"

"Ay," said Gunnar, "that was what Skamkell said when he uttered those very words when they rode over me."

"Well! thou hast avenged that now," says Kolskegg.

"I would like to know," says Gunnar, "whether I am by so much the less brisk and bold than other men, because I think more of killing men than they?"

CHAPTER LV.

NJAL'S ADVICE TO GUNNAR.

Now those tidings are heard far and wide, and many said that they thought they had not happened before it was likely. Gunnar rode to Bergthorsknoll and told Njal of these deeds.

Njal said, "Thou hast done great things, but thou hast been sorely tried."

"How will it now go henceforth?" says Gunnar.

"Wilt thou that I tell thee what hath not yet come to pass?" asks Njal. "Thou wilt ride to the Thing, and thou wilt abide by my counsel and get the greatest

honour from this matter. This will be the beginning of thy manslayings."

"But give me some cunning counsel," says Gunnar.

"I will do that," says Njal, "never slay more than one man in the same stock, and never break the peace which good men and true make between thee and others, and least of all in such a matter as this."

Gunnar said, "I should have thought there was more risk of that with others than with me."

"Like enough," says Njal, "but still thou shalt so think of thy quarrels, that if that should come to pass of which I have warned thee, then thou wilt have but a little while to live; but otherwise, thou wilt come to be an old man."

Gunnar said, "Dost thou know what will be thine own death?"

"I know it," says Njal.

"What?" asks Gunnar.

"That," says Njal, "which all would be the last to think."

After that Gunnar rode home.

A man was sent to Gizur the white and Geir the priest, for they had the blood-feud after Otkell. Then they had a meeting, and had a talk about what was to be done; and they were of one mind that the quarrel

should be followed up at law. Then some one was sought who would take the suit up, but no one was ready to do that.

"It seems to me," says Gizur, "that now there are only two courses, that one of us two undertakes the suit, and then we shall have to draw lots who it shall be, or else the man will be unatoned. We may make up our minds too, that this will be a heavy suit to touch; Gunnar has many kinsmen and is much beloved; but that one of us who does not draw the lot, shall ride to the Thing and never leave it until the suit comes to an end."

After that they drew lots, and Geir the priest drew the lot to take up the suit.

A little after, they rode from the west over the river, and came to the spot where the meeting had been by Rangriver, and dug up the bodies, and took witness to the wounds. After that they gave lawful notice and summoned nine neighbours to bear witness in the suit.

They were told that Gunnar was at home with about thirty men; then Geir the priest asked whether Gizur would ride against him with one hundred men.

"I will not do that," says he, "though the balance of force is great on our side."

After that they rode back home. The news that the suit was set on foot was spread all over the country, and the saying ran that the Thing would be very noisy and stormy.

CHAPTER LVI.

GUNNAR AND GEIR THE PRIEST STRIVE AT THE THING.

THERE was a man named Skapti. He was the son of Thorod.* That father and son were great chiefs, and very well skilled in law. Thorod was thought to be rather crafty and guileful. They stood by Gizur the white in every quarrel.

As for the Lithemen and the dwellers by Rang-river, they came in a great body to the Thing. Gunnar was so beloved that all said with one voice that they would back him.

Now they all come to the Thing and fit up their booths. In company with Gizur the white were these chiefs: Skapti Thorod's son, Asgrim Ellidagrim's son, Oddi of Kidberg, and Halldor Ornolf's son.

Now one day men went to the Hill of Laws, and then Geir the priest stood up and gave notice that he had a

* Thorod's mother was Thorvor, she was daughter of Thormod Skapti's son, son of Oleif the Broad, son of Oliver bairncarle.

suit of manslaughter against Gunnar for the slaying of Otkell. Another suit of manslaughter he brought against Gunnar for the slaying of Hallbjorn the white; then too he went on in the same way as to the slaying of Audulf, and so too as to the slaying of Skamkell. Then too he laid a suit of manslaughter against Kolskegg for the slaying of Hallkell.

And when he had given due notice of all his suits of manslaughter it was said that he spoke well. He asked, too, in what Quarter court the suits lay, and in what house in the district the defendants dwelt. After that men went away from the Hill of Laws, and so the Thing goes on till the day when the courts were to be set to try suits. Then either side gathered their men together in great strength.

Geir the priest and Gizur the white stood at the court of the men of Rangriver looking north, and Gunnar and Njal stood looking south towards the court.

Geir the priest bade Gunnar to listen to his oath, and then he took the oath, and afterwards declared his suit.

Then he let men bear witness of the notice given of the suit; then he called upon the neighbours who were to form the inquest to take their seats; then he called on Gunnar to challenge the inquest; and then he called on

the inquest to utter their finding. Then the neighbours who were summoned on the inquest went to the court and took witness, and said that there was a bar to their finding in the suit as to Audulf's slaying, because the next of kin who ought to follow it up was in Norway, and so they had nothing to do with that suit.

After that they uttered their finding in the suit as to Otkell, and brought in Gunnar as truly guilty of killing him.

Then Geir the priest called on Gunnar for his defence, and took witness of all the steps in the suit which had been proved.

Then Gunnar, in his turn, called on Geir the priest to listen to his oath, and to the defence which he was about to bring forward in the suit. Then he took the oath and said—

"This defence I make to this suit, that I took witness and outlawed Otkell before my neighbours for that bloody wound which I got when Otkell gave me a hurt with his spur; but thee, Geir the priest, I forbid by a lawful protest made before a priest, to pursue this suit, and so, too, I forbid the judges to hear it; and with this I make all the steps hitherto taken in this suit void and of none-effect. I forbid thee by a lawful protest, a full, fair, and binding protest, as I have a right to forbid

thee by the common custom of the Thing and by the law of the land.

"Besides, I will tell thee something else which I mean to do," says Gunnar.

"What!" says Geir, "wilt thou challenge me to the island as thou art wont, and not bear the law?"

"Not that," says Gunnar; "I shall summon thee at the Hill of Laws for that thou calledst those men on the inquest who had no right to deal with Audulf's slaying, and I will declare thee for that guilty of outlawry."

Then Njal said, "Things must not take this turn, for the only end of it will be that this strife will be carried to the uttermost. Each of you, as it seems to me, has much on his side. There are some of these manslaughters, Gunnar, about which thou canst say nothing to hinder the court from finding thee guilty; but thou hast set on foot a suit against Geir, in which he, too, must be found guilty. Thou too, Geir the Priest, shalt know that this suit of outlawry which hangs over thee shall not fall to the ground if thou wilt not listen to my words."

Thorod the priest said, "It seems to us as though the most peaceful way would be that a settlement and atonement were come to in the suit. But why sayest thou so little, Gizur the white?"

"It seems to me," says Gizur, "as though we shall

need to have strong props for our suit; we may see, too, that Gunnar's friends stand near him, and so the best turn for us that things can take will be that good men and true should utter an award on the suit, if Gunnar so wills it."

"I have ever been willing to make matters up," says Gunnar; "and besides, ye have much wrong to follow up, but still I think I was hard driven to do as I did."

And now the end of those suits was, by the counsel of the wisest men, that all the suits were put to arbitration; six men were to make this award, and it was uttered there and then at the Thing.

The award was that Skamkell should be unatoned. The blood money for Otkell's death was to be set off against the hurt Gunnar got from the spur; and as for the rest of the manslaughters, they were paid for after the worth of the men, and Gunnar's kinsmen gave money so that all the fines might be paid up at the Thing.

Then Geir the Priest and Gizur the white went up and gave Gunnar pledges that they would keep the peace in good faith.

Gunnar rode home from the Thing, and thanked men for their help, and gave gifts to many, and got the greatest honour from the suit.

Now Gunnar sits at home in his honour.

CHAPTER LVII.

OF STARKAD AND HIS SONS.

THERE was a man named Starkad; he was a son of Bork the waxytoothed-blade, the son of Thorkell clubfoot, who took the land round about Threecorner as the first settler. His wife's name was Hallbera.* The sons of Starkad and Hallbera were these: Thorgeir and Bork and Thorkell. Hildigunna the leech was their sister.

They were very proud men in temper, hard-hearted and unkind. They treated men wrongfully.

There was a man named Egil; he was a son of Kol, who took land as a settler between Storlek and Reydwater. The brother of Egil was Aunund of Witchwood, father of Hall the strong, who was at the slaying of Holt-Thorir with the sons of Kettle the smooth-tongued.

Egil kept house at Sandgil; his sons were these: Kol, and Ottar, and Hauk. Their mother's name was Steinvor; she was Starkad's sister.

Egil's sons were tall and strifeful; they were most

* She was daughter of Hroald the red and Hildigunna Thorstein titling's daughter. The mother of Hildigunna was Aud Eyvind Karf's daughter, the sister of Modolf the wise of Mosfell, from whom the Modylfings are sprung.

unfair men. They were always on one side with Starkad's sons. Their sister was Gudruna nightsun, and she was the best-bred of women.

Egil had taken into his house two Easterlings; the one's name was Thorir and the other's Thorgrim. They were not long come out hither for the first time, and were wealthy and beloved by their friends; they were well skilled in arms, too, and dauntless in everything.

Starkad had a good horse of chesnut hue, and it was thought that no horse was his match in fight. Once it happened that these brothers from Sandgil were away under the Threecorner. They had much gossip about all the householders in the Fleetlithe, and they fell at last to asking whether there was any one that would fight a horse against them.

But there were some men there who spoke so as to flatter and honour them, that not only was there no one who would dare do that, but that there was no one that had such a horse.

Then Hildigunna answered, "I know that man who will dare to fight horses with you."

"Name him," they say.

"Gunnar has a brown horse," she says, "and he will dare to fight his horse against you, and against any one else."

"As for you women," they say, "you think no one can be Gunnar's match; but though Geir the Priest or Gizur the white have come off with shame from before him, still it is not settled that we shall fare in the same way."

"Ye will fare much worse," she says; and so there arose out of this the greatest strife between them. Then Starkad said—

"My will is that ye try your hands on Gunnar last of all; for ye will find it hard work to go against his good luck."

"Thou wilt give us leave, though, to offer him a horse-fight?"

"I will give you leave, if ye play him no trick."

They said they would be sure to do what their father said.

Now they rode to Lithend; Gunnar was at home, and went out, and Kolskegg and Hjort went with him, and they gave them a hearty welcome, and asked whither they meant to go?

"No farther than hither," they say. "We are told that thou hast a good horse, and we wish to challenge thee to a horse-fight."

"Small stories can go about my horse," says Gunnar; "he is young and untried in every way."

"But still thou wilt be good enough to have the fight, for Hildigunna guessed that thou wouldest be easy in matching thy horse."

"How came ye to talk about that?" says Gunnar.

"There were some men," say they, "who were sure that no one would dare to fight his horse with ours."

"I would dare to fight him," says Gunnar; "but I think that was spitefully said."

"Shall we look upon the match as made, then?" they asked.

"Well, your journey will seem to you better if ye have your way in this; but still I will beg this of you, that we so fight our horses that we make sport for each other, but that no quarrel may arise from it, and that ye put no shame upon me; but if ye do to me as ye do to others, then there will be no help for it but that I shall give you such a buffet as it will seem hard to you to put up with. In a word, I shall do then just as ye do first."

Then they ride home. Starkad asked how their journey had gone off; they said that Gunnar had made their going good.

"He gave his word to fight his horse, and we settled when and where the horse-fight should be; but it was plain in everything that he thought he fell short of us, and he begged and prayed to get off."

"It will often be found," says Hildigunna, "that Gunnar is slow to be drawn into quarrels, but a hard hitter if he cannot avoid them."

Gunnar rode to see Njal, and told him of the horse-fight, and what words had passed between them, "but how dost thou think the horse-fight will turn out?"

"Thou wilt be uppermost," says Njal, "but yet many a man's bane will arise out of this fight."

"Will my bane perhaps come out of it?" asks Gunnar.

"Not out of this," says Njal; "but still they will bear in mind both the old and the new feud who fare against thee, and thou wilt have naught left for it but to yield."

Then Gunnar rode home.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HOW GUNNAR'S HORSE FOUGHT.

JUST then Gunnar heard of the death of his father-in-law Hauskuld; a few nights after, Thorgerda, Thrain's wife, was delivered at Gritwater, and gave birth to a boy child. Then she sent a man to her mother, and bade her choose whether it should be called Glum or Hauskuld. She

bade call it Hauskuld. So that name was given to the boy.

Gunnar and Hallgerda had two sons, the one's name was Hogni and the other's Grani. Hogni was a brave man of few words, distrustful and slow to believe, but truthful.

Now men ride to the horse-fight, and a very great crowd is gathered together there. Gunnar was there and his brothers, and the sons of Sigfus. Njal and all his sons. There too was come Starkad and his sons, and Egil and his sons, and they said to Gunnar that now they would lead the horses together.

Gunnar said, "That was well."

Skarphedinn said, "Wilt thou that I drive thy horse, kinsman Gunnar?"

"I will not have that," says Gunnar.

"It wouldn't be amiss though," says Skarphedinn; "we are hot-headed on both sides."

"Ye would say or do little," says Gunnar, "before a quarrel would spring up; but with me it will take longer, though it will be all the same in the end."

After that the horses were led together; Gunnar busked him to drive his horse, but Skarphedinn led him out. Gunnar was in a red kirtle, and had about his loins a broad belt, and a great riding-rod in his hand.

Then the horses ran at one another, and bit each other long, so that there was no need for any one to touch them, and that was the greatest sport.

Then Thorgeir and Kol made up their minds that they would push their horse forward just as the horses rushed together, and see if Gunnar would fall before him.

Now the horses ran at one another again, and both Thorgeir and Kol ran alongside their horses' flank.

Gunnar pushes his horse against them, and what happened in a trice was this, that Thorgeir and his brother fall down flat on their backs, and their horse a-top of them.

Then they spring up and rush at Gunnar. Gunnar swings himself free and seizes Kol, casts him down on the field, so that he lies senseless. Thorgeir Starkad's son, smote Gunnar's horse such a blow that one of his eyes started out. Gunnar smote Thorgeir with his riding-rod, and down falls Thorgeir senseless ; but Gunnar goes to his horse, and said to Kolskegg, " Cut off the horse's head ; he shall not live a maimed and blemished beast."

So Kolskegg cut the head off the horse.

Then Thorgeir got on his feet and took his weapons, and wanted to fly at Gunnar, but that was stopped, and there was a great throng and crush.

Skarphedinn said, "this crowd wearies me, and it is far more manly that men should fight it out with weapons; and so he sang a song,—

"At the Thing there is a throng;
Past all bounds the crowding comes;
Hard 'twill be to patch up peace
'Twixt the men: this wearies me;
Worthier is it far for men
Weapons red with gore to stain;
I for one would sooner tame
Hunger huge of cub of wolf."

Gunnar was still, so that one man held him, and spoke no ill words.

Njal tried to bring about a settlement, or to get pledges of peace; but Thorgeir said he would neither give nor take peace; far rather, he said, would he see Gunnar dead for the blow.

Kolskegg said, "Gunnar has before now stood too fast, than that he should have fallen for words alone, and so it will be again."

Now men ride away from the horse-field, every one to his home. They make no attack on Gunnar, and so that half-year passed away. At the Thing, the summer after, Gunnar met Olaf the peacock, his cousin, and he asked him to come and see him, but yet bade him be ware

of himself; "For," says he, "they will do us all the harm they can, and mind and fare always with many men at thy back."

He gave him much good counsel beside, and they agreed that there should be the greatest friendship between them.

CHAPTER LIX.

OF ASGRIM AND WOLF UGGIS' SON.

ASGRIM Ellidagrim's son, had a suit to follow up at the Thing against Wolf Uggis' son. It was a matter of inheritance. Asgrim took it up in such a way as was seldom his wont; for there was a bar to his suit, and the bar was this, that he had summoned five neighbours to bear witness, when he ought to have summoned nine. And now they have this as their bar.

Then Gunnar spoke and said, "I will challenge thee to single combat on the island, Wolf Uggis' son, if men are not to get their rights by law; and Njal and my friend Helgi would like that I should take some share in defending thy cause, Asgrim, if they were not here themselves."

"But," says Wolf, "this quarrel is not one between thee and me."

"Still it shall be as good as though it were," says Gunnar.

And the end of the suit was, that Wolf had to pay down all the money.

Then Asgrim said to Gunnar, "I will ask thee to come and see me this summer, and I will ever be with thee in lawsuits, and never against thee."

Gunnar rides home from the Thing, and a little while after, he and Njal met. Njal besought Gunnar to be ware of himself, and said he had been told that those away under the Threecorner meant to fall on him, and bade him never go about with a small company, and always to have his weapons with him. Gunnar said so it should be, and told him that Asgrim had asked him to pay him a visit, "and I mean to go now this harvest."

"Let no men know before thou farest how long thou wilt be away," said Njal; "but, besides, I beg thee to let my sons ride with thee, and then no attack will be made on thee."

So they settled that among themselves.

"Now the summer wears away till it was eight weeks to winter, and then Gunnar says to Kolskegg "Make thee ready to ride, for we shall ride to a feast at Tongue."

"Shall we say anything about it to Njal's sons?" said Kolskegg.

"No," says Gunnar; "they shall fall into no quarrels for me."

CHAPTER LX.

AN ATTACK AGAINST GUNNAR AGREED ON.

THEY rode three together, Gunnar and his brothers. Gunnar had the bill and his sword, Oliver's gift; but Kolskegg had his short sword; Hjort, too, had proper weapons.

Now they rode to Tongue, and Asgrim gave them a hearty welcome, and they were there some while. At last they gave it out that they meant to go home there and then. Asgrim gave them good gifts, and offered to ride east with them, but Gunnar said there was no need of any such thing; and so he did not go.

Sigurd Swinehead was the name of a man who dwelt by Thurso water. He came to the farm under the Three-corner, for he had given his word to keep watch on Gunnar's doings, and so he went and told them of his journey home; "and," quoth he, "there could never be a finer chance than just now, when he has only two men with him."

"How many men shall we need to have to lie in wait for him?" says Starkad.

"Weak men shall be as nothing before him," he says; "and it is not safe to have fewer than thirty men."

"Where shall we lie in wait?"

"By Knafaholes," he says; "there he will not see us before he comes on us."

"Go thou to Sandgil and tell Egil that fifteen of them must busk themselves thence, and now other fifteen will go hence to Knafaholes."

Thorgeir said to Hildigunna, "This hand shall show thee Gunnar dead this very night."

"Nay, but I guess," says she, "that thou wilt hang thy head after ye two meet."

So those four, father and sons, fare away from the Threecorner, and eleven men besides, and they fared to Knafaholes, and lay in wait there.

Sigurd Swinehead came to Sandgil and said, "Hither am I sent by Starkad and his sons to tell thee, Egil, that ye, father and sons, must fare to Knafaholes to lie in wait for Gunnar."

"How many shall we fare in all?" says Egil.

"Fifteen, reckoning me," he says.

Kol said, "Now I mean to try my hand on Kolskegg."

"Then I think thou meanest to have a good deal on thy hands," says Sigurd.

Egil begged his Easterlings to fare with him. They said they had no quarrel with Gunnar; "and besides," says Thorir, "ye seem to need much help here, when a crowd of men shall go against three men."

Then Egil went away and was wroth.

Then the mistress of the house said to the Easterling —"In an evil hour hath my daughter Gudruna humbled herself, and broken the point of her maidenly pride, and lain by thy side as thy wife, when thou wilt not dare to follow thy father-in-law, and thou must be a coward," she says.

"I will go," he says, "with thy husband, and neither of us two shall come back."

After that he went to Thorgrim his messmate, and said, "Take thou now the keys of my chests; for I shall never unlock them again. I bid thee take for thine own whatever of our goods thou wilt; but sail away from Iceland, and do not think of revenge for me. But if thou dost not leave the land, it will be thy death."

So the Easterling joined himself to their band.

CHAPTER LXI.

GUNNAR'S DREAM.

Now we must go back and say that Gunnar rides east over Thurso water, but when he had gone a little way from the river, he grew very drowsy, and bade them lie down and rest there.

They did so. He fell fast asleep, and struggled much as he slumbered.

Then Kolskegg said, "Gunnar dreams now." But Hjort said, "I would like to wake him."

"That shall not be," said Kolskegg, "but he shall dream his dream out."

Gunnar lay a very long while, and threw off his shield from him, and he grew very warm. Kolskegg said "What hast thou dreamt, kinsman?"

"That have I dreamt," says Gunnar, "which if I had dreamt it there, I would never have ridden with so few men from Tongue."

"Tell us thy dream," says Kolskegg.

Then Gunnar sang a song.

"Chief, that chargest foes in fight!
Now I fear that I have ridden

Short of men from Tongue, this harvest;
Raven's fast I sure shall break.
Lord, that scatters Ocean's fire!*
This, at least, I long to say,
Kite with wolf shall fight for marrow,
Ill I dreamt with wandering thought."

"I dreamt, methought, that I was riding on by Knafaholes, and there I thought I saw many wolves, and they all made at me; but I turned away from them straight towards Rangriver, and then methought they pressed hard on me on all sides, but I kept them at bay, and shot all those that were foremost, till they came so close to me that I could not use my bow against them. Then I took my sword, and I smote with it with one hand, but thrust at them with my bill with the other. Shield myself then, I did not, and methought then I knew not what shielded me. Then I slew many wolves, and thou, too, Kolskegg; but Hjort methought they pulled down, and tore open his breast, and one methought had his heart in his maw; but I grew so wroth that I hewed that wolf asunder just below the brisket, and after that methought the wolves turned and fled. Now my counsel is, brother Hjort, that thou ridest back west to Tongue."

* "Ocean's fire," a periphrasis for "gold." The whole line is a periphrasis for "bountiful chief."

"I will not do that," says Hjort; "though I know my death is sure, I will stand by thee still."

Then they rode and came east by Knafaholes, and Kolskegg said—

"Seest thou, kinsman! many spears stand up by the holes, and men with weapons."

"It does not take me unawares," says Gunnar, "that my dream comes true."

"What is best to be done now?" says Kolskegg; "I guess thou wilt not run away from them."

"They shall not have that to jeer about," says Gunnar, "but we will ride on down to the ness by Rangriver; there is some vantage ground there."

Now they rode on to the ness, and made them ready there, and as they rode on past them, Kol called out and said—

"Whither art thou running to now, Gunnar?"

But Kolskegg said, "Say the same thing farther on when this day has come to an end."

CHAPTER LXII.

THE SLAYING OF HJORT AND FOURTEEN MEN.

AFTER that Starkad egged on his men, and then they turn down upon them into the ness. Sigurd Swinehead came first and had a red targe, but in his other hand he held a cutlass. Gunnar sees him and shoots an arrow at him from his bow; he held the shield up aloft when he saw the arrow flying high, and the shaft passes through the shield and into his eye, and so came out at the nape of his neck, and that was the first man slain.

A second arrow Gunnar shot at Ulfhedinn, one of Starkad's men, and that struck him about the middle and he fell at the feet of a yeoman, and the yeoman over him. Kolskegg cast a stone and struck the yeoman on the head, and that was his deathblow.

Then Starkad said, "'Twill never answer our end that he should use his bow, but let us come on well and stoutly." Then each man egged on the other, and Gunnar guarded himself with his bow and arrows as long as he could; after that he throws them down, and then he takes his bill and sword and fights with both

hands. There is long the hardest fight, but still Gunnar and Kolskegg slew man after man.

Then Thorgeir Starkad's son, said, "I vowed to bring Hildigunna thy head, Gunnar."

Then Gunnar sang a song,—

"Thou, that battle-sleet down bringeth,
Scarce I trow thou speakest truth;
She, the girl with golden armlets,
Cannot care for such a gift;
But, O serpent's hoard despoiler!
If the maid must have my head—
Maid whose wrist Rhine's fire* wreatheth,
Closer come to crash of spear."

"She will not think that so much worth having," says Gunnar; "but still to get it thou wilt have to come nearer!"

Thorgeir said to his brothers—

"Let us run all of us upon him at once; he has no shield and we shall have his life in our hands."

So Bork and Thorkel both ran forward and were quicker than Thorgeir. Bork made a blow at Gunnar, and Gunnar threw his bill so hard in the way, that the sword flew out of Bork's hand; then he sees Thorkel standing on his other hand within stroke of sword. Gunnar was standing with his body swayed a little on

* "Rhine's fire," a periphrasis for gold.

one side, and he makes a sweep with his sword, and caught Thorkel on the neck, and off flew his head.

Kol Egil's son, said, "Let me get at Kolskegg," and turning to Kolskegg he said, "This I have often said, that we two would be just about an even match in fight."

"That we can soon prove," says Kolskegg.

Kol thrust at him with his spear; Kolskegg had just slain a man and had his hands full, and so he could not throw his shield before the blow, and the thrust came upon his thigh, on the outside of the limb and went through it.

Kolskegg turned sharp round, and strode towards him, and smote him with his short sword on the thigh, and cut off his leg, and said, "Did it touch thee or not?"

"Now," says Kol, "I pay for being bare of my shield."

So he stood a while on his other leg and looked at the stump.

"Thou needest not to look at it," said Kolskegg; "'tis even as thou seest, the leg is off."

Then Kol fell down dead.

But when Egil sees this, he runs at Gunnar and makes a cut at him; Gunnar thrusts at him with the bill and struck him in the middle, and Gunnar hoists him up on the bill and hurls him out into Rangriver.

Then Starkad said, "Wretch that thou art indeed," Thorir Easterling, "when thou sittest by; but thy host, and father-in-law Egil, is slain."

Then the Easterling sprung up and was very wroth. Hjort had been the death of two men, and the Easterling leapt on him and smote him full on the breast. Then Hjort fell down dead on the spot.

Gunner sees this and was swift to smite at the Easterling, and cuts him asunder at the waist.

A little while after Gunnar hurls the bill at Bork, and struck him in the middle, and the bill went through him and stuck in the ground.

Then Kolskegg cut off Hauk Egil's son's head, and Gunnar smites off Otter's hand at the elbow-joint. Then Starkad said—

"Let us fly now. We have not to do with men!"

Gunnar said, "Ye two will think it a sad story if there is naught on you to show that ye have both been in the battle."

Then Gunnar ran after Starkad and Thorgeir, and gave them each a wound. After that they parted; and Gunnar and his brothers had then wounded many men who got away from the field, but fourteen lost their lives, and Hjort the fifteenth.

Gunnar brought Hjort home, laid out on his shield,

and he was buried in a cairn there. Many men grieved for him, for he had many dear friends.

Starkad came home, too, and Hildigunna dressed his wounds and Thorgeir's, and said, "Ye would have given a great deal not to have fallen out with Gunnar."

"So we would," says Starkad.

CHAPTER LXIII.

NJAL'S COUNSEL TO GUNNAR.

STEINVOR, at Sandgil, besought Thorgrim the Easterling to take in hand the care of her goods, and not to sail away from Iceland, and so to keep in mind the death of his messmate and kinsman.

"My messmate Thorir," said he, "foretold that I should fall by Gunnar's hand if I stayed here in the land, and he must have foreseen that when he foreknew his own death."

"I will give thee," she says, "Gudruna my daughter to wife, and all my goods into the bargain."

"I knew not," he said, "that thou wouldest pay such a long price."

After that they struck the bargain that he shall have her, and the wedding feast was to be the next summer.

Now Gunnar rides to Bergthorsknoll, and Kolskegg with him. Njal was out of doors and his sons, and they went to meet Gunnar and gave them a hearty welcome. After that they fell a-talking, and Gunnar said—

"Hither am I come to seek good counsel and help at thy hand."

"That is thy due," said Njal.

"I have fallen into a great strait," says Gunnar, "and slain many men, and I wish to know what thou wilt make of the matter?"

"Many will say this," said Njal, "that thou hast been driven into it much against thy will; but now thou shalt give me time to take counsel with myself."

Then Njal went away all by himself, and thought over a plan, and came back and said—

"Now have I thought over the matter somewhat, and it seems to me as though this must be carried through—if it be carried through at all—with hardihood and daring. Thorgeir has got my kinswoman Thorfinna with child, and I will hand over to thee the suit for seduction. Another suit of outlawry against Starkad I hand over also to thee, for having hewn trees in my wood on the Threecorner ridge. Both these suits shalt thou take up. Thou shalt fare too, to the spot where ye fought, and dig up the dead, and name wit-

nesses to the wounds, and make all the dead outlaws, for that they came against thee with that mind to give thee and thy brothers wounds or swift death. But if this be tried at the Thing, and it be brought up against thee that thou first gave Thorgeir a blow, and so mayst neither plead thine own cause nor that of others, then I will answer in that matter, and say that I gave thee back thy rights at the Thingskala-Thing, so that thou shouldest be able to plead thine own suit as well as that of others, and then there will be an answer to that point. Thou shalt also go to see Tyrfing of Berianess, and he must hand over to thee a suit against Aunund of Witchwood, who has the blood feud after his brother Egil."

Then first of all Gunnar rode home; but a few nights after Njal's sons and Gunnar rode thither where the bodies were, and dug them up that were buried there. Then Gunnar summoned them all as outlaws for assault and treachery, and rode home after that.

CHAPTER LXIV.

OF VALGARD AND MORD.

THAT same harvest Valgard the guileful came out to Iceland, and fared home to Hof. Then Thorgeir went to

see Valgard and Mord, and told them what a strait they were in if Gunnar were to be allowed to make all those men outlaws whom he had slain.

Valgard said that must be Njal's counsel, and yet every thing had not come out yet which he was likely to have taught him.

Then Thorgeir begged those kinsmen for help and backing, but they held out a long while, and at last asked for, and got a large sum of money.

That, too, was part of their plan, that Mord should ask for Thorkatla, Gizur the white's daughter, and Thorgeir was to ride at once west across the river with Valgard and Mord.

So the day after they rode twelve of them together. and came to Mossfell. There they were heartily welcomed, and they put the question to Gizur about the wooing, and the end of it was that the match should be made, and the wedding feast was to be in half a month's space at Mossfell.

They ride home, and after that they ride to the wedding, and there was a crowd of guests to meet them, and it went off well. Thorkatla went home with Mord and took the housekeeping in hand, but Valgard went abroad again the next summer.

Now Mord eggs on Thorgeir to set his suit on foot

against Gunnar, and Thorgeir went to find Aunund; he bids him now to begin a suit for manslaughter for his brothér Egil and his sons; "but I will begin one for the manslaughter of my brothers, and for the wounds of myself and my father."

He said he was quite ready to do that, and then they set out, and give notice of the manslaughter, and summon nine neighbours who dwelt nearest to the spot where the deed was done. This beginning of the suit was heard of at Lithend; and then Gunnar rides to see Njal, and told him, and asked what he wished them to do next.

"Now," says Njal, "thou shalt summon those who dwell next to the spot, and thy neighbours; and call men to witness before the neighbours, and choose out Kol as the slayer in the manslaughter of Hjort thy brother: for that is lawful and right; then thou shalt give notice of the suit for manslaughter at Kol's hand, though he be dead. Then shalt thou call men to witness, and summon the neighbours to ride to the Allthing to bear witness of the fact, whether they, Kol and his companions, were on the spot, and in onslaught when Hjort was slain. Thou shalt also summon Thorgeir for the suit of seduction, and Aunund at the suit of Tyrfing."

Gunnar now did in every thing as Njal gave him counsel. This men thought a strange beginning of suits, and now these matters come before the Thing. Gunnar rides to the Thing, and Njal's sons and the sons of Sigfus. Gunnar had sent messengers to his cousins and kinsmen, that they should ride to the Thing, and come with as many men as they could, and told them that this matter would lead to much strife. So they gathered together in a great band from the west.

Mord rode to the Thing and Runolf of the Dale, and those under the Threecorner, and Aunund of Witchwood. But when they come to the Thing, they join them in one company with Gizur the white and Geir the priest.

CHAPTER LXV.

OF FINES AND ATONEMENTS.

GUNNAR, and the sons of Sigfus, and Njal's sons, went altogether in one band, and they marched so swiftly and closely that men who came in their way had to take heed lest they should get a fall; and nothing was so often spoken about over the whole Thing as these great lawsuits.

Gunnar went to meet his cousins, and Olaf and his

men greeted him well. They asked Gunnar about the fight, but he told them all about it, and was just in all he said; he told them, too, what steps he had taken since.

Then Olaf said, "'Tis worth much to see how close Njal stands by thee in all counsel."

Gunnar said he should never be able to repay that, but then he begged them for help; and they said that was his due.

Now the suits on both sides came before the court, and each pleads his cause.

Mord asked—"How it was that a man could have the right to set a suit on foot who, like Gunnar, had already made himself an outlaw by striking Thorgeir a blow?"

"Wast thou," answered Njal, "at Thingskala-Thing last autumn?"

"Surely I was," says Mord.

"Heardest thou," asks Njal, "how Gunnar offered him full atonement? Then I gave back Gunnar his right to do all lawful deeds."

"That is right and good law," says Mord, "but how does the matter stand if Gunnar has laid the slaying of Hjort at Kol's door, when it was the Easterling that slew him?"

"That was right and lawful," says Njal, "when he chose him as the slayer before witnesses."

"That was lawful and right, no doubt," says Mord; "but for what did Gunnar summon them all as outlaws?"

"Thou needest not to ask about that," says Njal, "when they went out to deal wounds and manslaughter."

"Yes," says Mord, "but neither befell Gunnar."

"Gunnar's brothers," said Njal, "Kolskegg and Hjort, were there, and one of them got his death and the other a flesh wound."

"Thou speakest nothing but what is law," says Mord, "though it is hard to abide by it.

Then Hjallti Skeggis son of Thursodale, stood forth and said,—

"I have had no share in any of your lawsuits; but I wish to know whether thou wilt do something, Gunnar, for the sake of my words and friendship."

"What askest thou?" says Gunnar.

"This," he says, "that ye lay down the whole suit to the award and judgment of good men and true."

"If I do so," said Gunnar, "then thou shalt never be against me, whatever men I may have to deal with."

"I will give my word to that," says Hjallti.

After that he tried his best with Gunnar's adversaries,

and brought it about that they were all set at one again. And after that each side gave the other pledges of peace; but for Thorgeir's wound came the suit for seduction, and for the hewing in the wood, Starkad's wound. Thorgeir's brothers were atoned for by half fines, but half fell away for the onslaught on Gunnar. Egil's slaying and Tyrfing's lawsuit were set off against each other. For Hjort's slaying, the slaying of Kol and of the Easterling were to come, and as for all the rest, they were atoned for with half fines.

Njal was in this award, and Asgrim Ellidagrim's son, and Hjallti Skeggi's son.

Njal had much money out at interest with Starkad, and at Sandgil too, and he gave it all to Gunnar to make up these fines.

So many friends had Gunnar at the Thing, that he not only paid up there and then all the fines on the spot, but gave besides gifts to many chiefs who had lent him help; and he had the greatest honour from the suit; and all were agreed in this, that no man was his match in all the South Quarter.

So Gunnar rides home from the Thing and sits there in peace, but still his adversaries envied him much for his honour.

CHAPTER LXVI.

OF THORGEIR OTKELL'S SON.

Now we must tell of Thorgeir Otkell's son; he grew up to be a tall strong man, true-hearted and guileless, but rather too ready to listen to fair words. He had many friends among the best men, and was much beloved by his kinsmen.

Once on a time Thorgeir Starkad's son, had been to see his kinsman Mord.

"I can ill brook," he says, "that settlement of matters which we and Gunnar had, but I have bought thy help so long as we two are above ground; I wish thou wouldest think out some plan and lay it deep; this is why I say it right out, because I know that thou art Gunnar's greatest foe, and he too thine. I will much increase thine honour if thou takest pains in this matter."

"It will always seem as though I were greedy of gain, but so it must be. Yet it will be hard to take care that thou mayst not seem to be a trucebreaker, or peace-breaker, and yet carry out thy point. But now I have been told that Kolskegg means to try a suit, and regain a fourth part of Moeidsknoll, which was paid to thy father as an atonement for his son. He has taken

up this suit for his mother, but this too is Gunnar's counsel, to pay in goods and not to let the land go. We must wait till this comes about, and then declare that he has broken the settlement made with you. He has also taken a cornfield from Thorgeir Otkell's son, and so broken the settlement with him too. Thou shalt go to see Thorgeir Otkell's son, and bring him into the matter with thee, and then fall on Gunnar; but if ye fail in aught of this, and cannot get him hunted down, still ye shall set on him over and over again. I must tell thee that Njal has 'spaed' his fortune, and foretold about his life, if he slays more than once in the same stock, that it would lead him to his death, if it so fell out that he broke the settlement made after the deed. Therefore shalt thou bring Thorgeir into the suit, because he has already slain his father; and now, if ye two are together in an affray, thou shalt shield thyself; but he will go boldly on, and then Gunnar will slay him. Then he has slain twice in the same stock, but thou shalt fly from the fight. And if this is to drag him to his death he will break the settlement afterwards, and so we may wait till then."

After that Thorgeir goes home and tells his father secretly. Then they agreed among themselves that they should work out this plot by stealth.

CHAPTER LXVII.

OF THORGEIR STARKAD'S SON.

SOMETIME after Thorgeir Starkad's son fared to Kirkby to see his namesake, and they went aside to speak, and talked secretly all day; but at the end Thorgeir Starkad's son, gave his namesake a spear inlaid with gold, and rode home afterwards; they made the greatest friendship the one with the other.

At the Thingskala-Thing in the autumn, Kolskegg laid claim to the land at Moeidsknoll, but Gunnar took witness, and offered ready money, or another piece of land at a lawful price to those under the Threecorner.

Thorgeir took witness also, that Gunnar was breaking the settlement made between them.

After that the Thing was broken up, and so the next year wore away.

Those namesakes were always meeting, and there was the greatest friendship between them. Kolskegg spoke to Gunnar and said—

"I am told that there is great friendship between those namesakes, and it is the talk of many men that

they will prove untrue, and I would that thou wouldst be ware of thyself."

"Death will come to me when it will come," says Gunnar, "wherever I may be, if that is my fate."

Then they left off talking about it.

About autumn, Gunnar gave out that they would work one week there at home, and the next down in the isles, and so make an end of their hay-making. At the same time, he let it be known that every man would have to leave the house, save himself and the women.

Thorgeir under Threecorner goes to see his namesake, but as soon as they met they began to talk after their wont, and Thorgeir Starkad's son, said—

"I would that we could harden our hearts and fall on Gunnar."

"Well," says Thorgeir Otkell's son, "every struggle with Gunnar has had but one end, that few have gained the day; besides, methinks it sounds ill to be called a peace-breaker."

"They have broken the peace, not we," says Thorgeir Starkad's son. "Gunnar took away from thee thy cornfield; and he has taken Moeidsknoll from my father and me."

And so they settle it between them to fall on Gunnar; and then Thorgeir said that Gunnar would be all alone

at home in a few nights' space, "and then thou shalt come to meet me with eleven men, but I will have as many."

After that Thorgeir rode home.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

OF NJAL AND THOSE NAMESAKES.

Now when Kolskegg and the house-carles had been three nights in the isles, Thorgeir Starkad's son had news of that, and sends word to his namesake that he should come to meet him on Threecorner ridge.

After that Thorgeir of the Threecorner busked him with eleven men; he rides up on the ridge and there waits for his namesake.

And now Gunnar is at home in his house, and those namesakes ride into a wood hard by. There such a drowsiness came over them that they could do naught else but sleep. So they hung their shields up in the boughs, and tethered their horses, and laid their weapons by their sides.

Njal was that night up in Thorolfsfell, and could not sleep at all, but went out and in by turns.

Thorhilda asked Njal why he could not sleep?

"Many things now flit before my eyes," said he; "I see many fetches of Gunnar's bitter foes, and what is very strange is this, they seem to be mad with rage, and yet they fare without plan or purpose."

A little after, a man rode up to the door and got off his horse's back and went in, and there was come the shepherd of Thorhilda and her husband.

"Didst thou find the sheep?" she asked.

"I found what might be more worth," said he.

"What was that?" asked Njal.

"I found twenty-four men up in the wood yonder; they had tethered their horses, but slept themselves. Their shields they had hung up in the boughs."

But so closely had he looked at them that he told of all their weapons and wargear and clothes, and then Njal knew plainly who each of them must have been, and said to him—

"'Twere good hiring if there were many such shepherds; and this shall ever stand to thy good; but still I will send thee on an errand."

He said at once he would go.

"Thou shalt go," says Njal, "to Lithend and tell Gunnar that he must fare to Gritwater, and then send after men; but I will go to meet with those who are in the wood and scare them away. This thing hath well

come to pass, so that they shall gain nothing by this journey, but lose much."

The shepherd set off and told Gunnar as plainly as he could the whole story. Then Gunnar rode to Gritwater and summoned men to him.

Now it is to be told of Njal how he rides to meet these namesakes.

"Unwarily ye lie here," he says, "or for what end shall this journey have been made? And Gunnar is not a man to be trifled with. But if the truth must be told then, this is the greatest treason. Ye shall also know this, that Gunnar is gathering force, and he will come here in the twinkling of an eye, and slay you all, unless ye ride away home."

They bestirred them at once, for they were in great fear, and took their weapons, and mounted their horses and galloped home under the Threecorner.

Njal fared to meet Gunnar and bade him not to break up his company.

"But I will go and seek for an atonement; now they will be finely frightened; but for this treason no less a sum shall be paid when one has to deal with all of them, than shall be paid for the slaying of one or other of those namesakes, though such a thing should come to pass. This money I will take into my keeping, and so

lay it out that it may be ready to thy hand when thou hast need of it."

CHAPTER LXIX.

OLAF THE PEACOCK'S GIFTS TO GUNNAR.

GUNNAR thanked Njal for his aid, and Njal rode away under the Threecorner, and told those namesakes that Gunnar would not break up his band of men before he had fought it out with them.

They began to offer terms for themselves, and were full of dread, and bade Njal to come between them with an offer of atonement.

Njal said that could only be if there were no guile behind. Then they begged him to have a share in the award, and said they would hold to what he awarded.

Njal said he would make no award unless it were at the Thing, and unless the best men were by; and they agreed to that.

Then Njal came between them, so that they gave each other pledges of peace and atonement.

Njal was to utter the award, and to name as his fellows those whom he chose.

A little while after those namesakes met Mord Val-

gard's son, and Mord blamed them much for having laid the matter in Njal's hands, when he was Gunnar's great friend. He said that would turn out ill for them.

Now men ride to the Althing after their wont, and now both sides are at the Thing.

Njal begged for a hearing, and asked all the best men who were come thither, what right at law they thought Gunnar had against those namesakes for their treason. They said they thought such a man had great right on his side.

Njal went on to ask, whether he had a right of action against all of them, or whether the leaders had to answer for them all in the suit?

They say that most of the blame would fall on the leaders, but a great deal still on them all.

"Many will say this," said Mord, "that it was not without a cause when Gunnar broke the settlement made with those namesakes."

"That is no breach of settlement," says Njal, "that any man should take the law against another; for with law shall our land be built up and settled, and with lawlessness wasted and spoiled."

Then Njal tells them that Gunnar had offered land for Moeidsknoll, or other goods.

Then those namesakes thought they had been beguiled

by Mord, and scolded him much, and said that this fine was all his doing.

Njal named twelve men as judges in the suit, and then every man paid a hundred in silver who had gone out, but each of those namesakes two hundred.

Njal took this money into his keeping, but either side gave the other pledges of peace, and Njal gave out the terms.

Then Gunnar rode from the Thing west to the Dales, till he came to Hjardarholt, and Olaf the peacock gave him a hearty welcome. There he sat half a month, and rode far and wide about the Dales, and all welcomed him with joyful hands. But at their parting Olaf said,

"I will give thee three things of price, a gold ring, and a cloak which Moorkjartan the Erse king owned, and a hound that was given me in Ireland; he is big, and no worse follower than a sturdy man. Besides, it is part of his nature that he has man's wit, and he will bay at every man whom he knows is thy foe, but never at thy friends; he can see, too, in any man's face, whether he means thee well or ill, and he will lay down his life to be true to thee. This hound's name is Sam."

After that he spoke to the hound, "Now shalt thou follow Gunnar, and do him all the service thou canst."

The hound went at once to Gunnar and laid himself down at his feet.

Olaf bade Gunnar to be ware of himself, and said he had many enviers, "For now thou art thought to be a famous man throughout all the land."

Gunnar thanked him for his gifts and good counsel, and rode home.

Now Gunnar sits at home for some time, and all is quiet.

CHAPTER LXX.

MORD'S COUNSEL.

A LITTLE after, those namesakes and Mord met, and they were not at all of one mind. They thought they had lost much goods for Mord's sake, but had got nothing in return; and they bade him set on foot some other plot which might do Gunnar harm.

Mord said so it should be. "But now this is my counsel, that thou, Thorgeir Otkell's son shouldest beguile Ormilda, Gunnar's kinswoman; but Gunnar will let his displeasure grow against thee at that, and then I will spread that story abroad that Gunnar will not suffer thee to do such things.

"Then ye two shall some time after make an

attack on Gunnar, but still ye must not seek him at home, for there is no thinking of that while the hound is alive."

So they settled this plan among them that it should be brought about.

Thorgeir began to turn his steps towards Ormilda, and Gunnar thought that ill, and great dislike arose between them.

So the winter wore away. Now comes the summer, and their secret meetings went on oftener than before.

As for Thorgeir of the Threecorner and Mord, they were always meeting; and they plan an onslaught on Gunnar, when he rides down to the isles to see after the work done by his house-carles.

One day Mord was ware of it when Gunnar rode down to the isles, and sent a man off under the Threecorner to tell Thorgeir that then would be the likeliest time to try to fall on Gunnar.

They bestirred them at once, and fare thence twelve together, but when they came to Kirkby there they found thirteen men waiting for them.

Then they made up their minds to ride down to Rangriver and lie in wait there for Gunnar.

But when Gunnar rode up from the isles, Kolskegg rode with him. Gunnar had his bow and his arrows

and his bill. Kolskegg had his short sword and weapons to match.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE SLAYING OF THORGEIR OTKELL'S SON.

THAT token happened as Gunnar and his brother rode up towards Rangriver, that much blood burst out on the bill.

Kolskegg asked what that might mean.

Gunnar says, "If such tokens took place in other lands, it was called 'wound-drops,' and Master Oliver told me also that this only happened before great fights."

So they rode on till they saw men sitting by the river on the other side, and they had tethered their horses.

Gunnar said, "Now we have an ambush."

Kolskegg answered, "Long have they been faithless; but what is best to be done now?"

"We will gallop up alongside them to the ford," says Gunnar, "and there make ready for them."

The others saw that and turned at once towards them.

Gunnar strings his bow, and takes his arrows and throws them on the ground before him, and shoots as

soon as ever they come within shot; by that Gunnar wounded many men, but some he slew.

Then Thorgeir Otkell's son spoke and said, "This is no use; let us make for him as hard as we can."

They did so, and first went Aunund the fair, Thorgeir's kinsman. Gunnar hurled the bill at him, and it fell on his shield and clove it in twain, but the bill rushed through Aunund. Augmund Shockhead rushed at Gunnar behind his back. Kolskegg saw that and cut off at once both Augmund's legs from under him, and hurled him out into Rangriver, and he was drowned there and then.

Then a hard battle arose; Gunnar cut with one hand and thrust with the other. Kolskegg slew some men and wounded many.

Thorgeir Starkad's son called out to his namesake, "It looks very little as though thou hadst a father to avenge."

"True it is," he answers, "that I do not make much way, but yet thou hast not followed in my footsteps; still I will not bear thy reproaches."

With that he rushes at Gunnar in great wrath, and thrust his spear through his shield, and so on through his arm.

Gunnar gave the shield such a sharp twist that the

spear-head broke short off at the socket. Gunnar sees that another man was come within reach of his sword, and he smites at him and deals him his death-blow. After that, he clutches his bill with both hands; just then, Thorgeir Otkell's son had come near him with a drawn sword, and Gunnar turns on him in great wrath, and drives the bill through him, and lifts him up aloft, and casts him out into Rangriver, and he drifts down towards the ford, and stuck fast there on a stone; and the name of that ford has since been Thorgeir's ford.

Then Thorgeir Starkad's son said, "Let us fly now; no victory will be fated to us this time."

So they all turned and fled from the field.

"Let us follow them up now," says Kolskegg, "and take thou thy bow and arrows, and thou wilt come within bow-shot of Thorgeir Starkad's son."

Then Gunnar sang a song.

"Reaver of rich river-treasure,
Plundered will our purses be,
Though to-day we wound no other
Warriors wight in play of spears;
Aye, if I for all these sailors
Lowly lying, fines must pay—
This is why I hold my hand,
Hearken, brother dear, to me."

"Our purses will be emptied," says Gunnar, "by the time that these are atoned for who now lie here dead."

"Thou wilt never lack money," says Kolskegg; "but Thorgeir will never leave off before he compasses thy death."

Gunnar sang another song.

"Lord of water-skates* that skim
Sea-king's fields, more good as he,
Shedding wounds' red stream, must stand
In my way ere I shall wince.
I, the golden armlets' warder,
Snakelike twined around my wrist,
Ne'er shall shun a foeman's faulchion
Flashing bright in din of fight."

"He, and a few more as good as he," says Gunnar, "must stand in my path ere I am afraid of them."

After that they ride home and tell the tidings.

Hallgerda was well pleased to hear them, and praised the deed much.

Rannveig said, "May be the deed is good; but somehow," she says, "I feel too downcast about it to think that good can come of it."

* "Water-skates," a periphrasis for ships.

CHAPTER LXXII.

OF THE SUITS FOR MANSLAUGHTER AT THE THING.

THESE tidings were spread far and wide, and Thorgeir's death was a great grief to many a man. Gizur the white and his men rode to the spot and gave notice of the manslaughter, and called the neighbours on the inquest to the Thing. Then they rode home west.

Njal and Gunnar met and talked about the battle. Then Njal said to Gunnar,—

"Now be ware of thyself? Now hast thou slain twice in the same stock; and so now take heed to thy behaviour, and think that it is as much as thy life is worth, if thou dost not hold to the settlement that is made."

"Nor do I mean to break it in any way," says Gunnar, "but still I shall need thy help at the Thing."

"I will hold to my faithfulness to thee," said Njal, "till my death day."

Then Gunnar rides home. Now the Thing draws near; and each side gather a great company; and it is a matter of much talk at the Thing how these suits will end.

Those two, Gizur the white, and Geir the Priest,

talked with each other as to who should give notice of the suit of manslaughter after Thorgeir, and the end of it was that Gizur took the suit on his hand, and gave notice of it at the Hill of Laws, and spoke in these words :—

"I gave notice of a suit for assault laid down by law against Gunnar Hamond's son; for that he rushed with an onslaught laid down by law on Thorgeir Otkell's son, and wounded him with a body wound, which proved a death wound, so that Thorgeir got his death.

"I say on this charge he ought to become a convicted outlaw, not to be fed, not to be forwarded, not to be helped or harboured in any need.

"I say that his goods are forfeited, half to me and half to the men of the Quarter, whose right it is by law to seize the goods of outlaws.

"I give notice of this charge in the Quarter Court, into which this suit ought by law to come.

"I give this lawful notice in the hearing of all men at the Hill of Laws.

"I give notice now of this suit, and of full forfeiture and outlawry against Gunnar Hamond's son."

A second time Gizur took witness, and gave notice of a suit against Gunnar Hamond's son, for that he had wounded Thorgeir Otkell's son with a body wound which

was a death wound, and from which Thorgeir got his death, on such and such a spot when Gunnar first sprang on Thorgeir with an onslaught, laid down by law.

After that he gave notice of this declaration as he had done of the first. Then he asked in what Quarter court the suit lay, and in what house in the district the defendant dwelt.

When that was over men left the Hill of Laws, and all said that he spoke well.

Gunnar kept himself well in hand and said little or nothing.

Now the Thing wears away till the day when the courts were to be set.

Then Gunnar stood looking south by the court of the men of Rangriver, and his men with him.

Gizur stood looking north, and calls his witnesses, and bade Gunnar to listen to his oath, and to his declaration of the suit, and to all the steps and proofs which he meant to bring forward. After that he took his oath, and then he brought forward the suit in the same shape before the court, as he had given notice of it before. Then he made them bring forward witness of the notice, then he bade the neighbours on the inquest to take their seats, and called upon Gunnar to challenge the inquest.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

OF THE ATONEMENT.

THEN Njal spoke and said,—

"Now I can no longer sit still and take no part. Let us go to where the neighbours sit on the inquest."

They went thither and challenged four neighbours out of the inquest, but they called on the five that were left to answer the following question in Gunnar's favour, "whether those namesakes had gone out with that mind to the place of meeting to do Gunnar a mischief if they could?"

But all bore witness at once that so it was.

Then Njal called this a lawful defence to the suit, and said he would bring forward proof of it unless they gave over the suit to arbitration.

Then many chiefs joined in praying for an atonement, and so it was brought about that twelve men should utter an award in the matter.

Then either side went and handselled this settlement to the other. Afterwards the award was made, and the sum to be paid settled, and it was all to be paid down then and there at the Thing.

But besides, Gunnar was to go abroad and Kolskegg

with him, and they were to be away three winters; but if Gunnar did not go abroad when he had a chance of a passage, then he was to be slain by the kinsmen of those whom he had killed.

Gunnar made no sign, as though he thought the terms of atonement were not good. He asked Njal for that money which he had handed over to him to keep. Njal had laid the money out at interest and paid it down all at once, and it just came to what Gunnar had to pay for himself.

Now they ride home. Gunnar and Njal rode both together from the Thing, and then Njal said to Gunnar—

"Take good care, messmate, that thou keepest to this atonement, and bear in mind what we have spoken about; for though thy former journey abroad brought thee to great honour, this will be a far greater honour to thee. Thou wilt come back with great glory, and live to be an old man, and no man here will then tread on thy heel; but if thou dost not fare away, and so breakest thy atonement, then thou wilt be slain here in the land, and that is ill knowing for those who are thy friends."

Gunnar said he had no mind to break the atonement, and he rides home and told them of the settlement.

Rannveig said it was well that he fared abroad, for then they must find some one else to quarrel with.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

KOLSKEGG GOES ABROAD.

THRAIN SIGFUS' son said to his wife that he meant to fare abroad that summer. She said that was well. So he took his passage with Hogni the white.

Gunnar took his passage with Arnfin of the Bay; and Kolskegg was to go with him.

Grim and Helgi, Njal's sons, asked their father's leave to go abroad too, and Njal said—

This foreign voyage ye will find hard work, so hard that it will be doubtful whether ye keep your lives; but still ye two will get some honour and glory, but it is not unlikely that a quarrel will arise out of your journey when ye come back."

Still they kept on asking their father to let them go, and the end of it was that he bade them go if they chose.

Then they got them a passage with Bard the black, and Olof Kettle's son of Elda; and it is the talk of the whole country that all the better men in that district were leaving it.

By this time Gunnar's sons, Hogni and Grani, were grown up; they were men of very different turn of mind.

Grani had much of his mother's temper, but Hogni was kind and good.

Gunnar made men bear down the wares of his brother and himself to the ship, and when all Gunnar's baggage had come down, and the ship was all but "boun," then Gunnar rides to Bergthorsknoll, and to other homesteads to see men, and thanked them all for the help they had given him.

The day after he gets ready early for his journey to the ship, and told all his people that he would ride away for good and all, and men took that much to heart, but still they said that they looked to his coming back afterwards.

Gunnar threw his arms round each of the household when he was "boun," and every one of them went out of doors with him; he leans on the butt of his spear and leaps into the saddle, and he and Kolskegg ride away.

They ride down along Markfleet, and just then Gunnar's horse tripped and threw him off. He turned with his face up towards the Lithe and the homestead at Lithend, and said—

"Fair is the Lithe; so fair that it has never seemed to me so fair; the corn fields are white to harvest, and the home mead is mown; and now I will ride back home, and not fare abroad at all."

"Do not this joy to thy foes," says Kolskegg, by

breaking thy atonement, for no man could think thou wouldst do thus, and thou mayst be sure that all will happen as Njal has said."

"I will not go away any whither," says Gunnar, "and so I would thou shouldest do too."

"That shall not be," says Kolskeg; "I will never do a base thing in this, nor in any thing else which is left to my good faith; and this is that one thing that could tear us asunder; but tell this to my kinsmen and to my mother, that I never mean to see Iceland again, for I shall soon learn that thou art dead, brother, and then there will be nothing left to bring me back."

So they parted there and then. Gunnar rides home to Lithend, but Kolskegg rides to the ship, and goes abroad.

Hallgerda was glad to see Gunnar when he came home, but his mother said little or nothing.

Now Gunnar sits at home that fall and winter, and had not many men with him.

Now the winter leaves the farm-yard. Olaf the peacock asked Gunnar and Hallgerda to come and stay with him; but as for the farm, to put it into the hands of his mother and his son Hogni.

Gunnar thought that a good thing at first, and agreed to it, but when it came to the point he would not do it.

But at the Thing next summer, Gizur the white, and

Geir the Priest, gave notice of Gunnar's outlawry at the Hill of Laws; and before the Thing broke up Gizur summoned all Gunnar's foes to meet in the "Great Rift."* He summoned Starkad under the Threecorner, and Thorgeir his son; Mord and Valgard the guileful; Geir the priest and Hjalti Skeggi's son; Thorbrand and Asbrand, Thorleik's sons; Eyjulf, and Aunund his son. Aunund of Witchwood and Thorgrim the Easterling of Sandgil.

Then Gizur spoke and said, "I will make you all this offer, that we go out against Gunnar this summer and slay him."

"I gave my word to Gunnar," said Hjalti, "here at the Thing, when he showed himself most willing to yield to my prayer, that I would never be in any attack upon him; and so it shall be."

Then Hjalti went away, but those who were left behind made up their minds to make an onslaught on Gunnar, and shook hands on the bargain, and laid a fine on any one that left the undertaking.

Mord was to keep watch and spy out when there was the best chance of falling on him, and they were forty

* "Great Rift," Almannagjá—The great volcanic rift, or "geo," as it would be called in Orkney and Shetland, which bounds the plain of the Allthing on one side.

men in this league, and they thought it would be a light thing for them to hunt down Gunnar, now that Kolskegg was away, and Thrain and many other of Gunnar's friends.

Men ride from the Thing, and Njal went to see Gunnar, and told him of his outlawry, and how an onslaught was planned against him.

"Methinks thou art the best of friends," says Gunnar; "thou makest me aware of what is meant."

"Now," says Njal, "I would that Skarphedinn should come to thy house, and my son Hauskuld; they will lay down their lives for thy life."

"I will not," says Gunnar, "that thy sons should be slain for my sake, and thou hast a right to look for other things from me."

"All thy care will come to nothing," says Njal; "quarrels will turn thitherward where my sons are as soon as thou art dead and gone."

"That is not unlikely," says Gunnar, "but still it would mislike me that they fell into them for me; but this one thing I will ask of thee, that ye see after my son Hogni, but I say naught of Grani, for he does not behave himself much after my mind."

Njal rode home, and gave his word to do that.

It is said that Gunnar rode to all meetings of men,

and to all lawful Things, and his foes never dared to fall on him.

And so some time went on that he went about as a free and guiltless man.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE RIDING TO LITHEND.

NEXT autumn Mord Valgard's son, sent word that Gunnar would be all alone at home, but all his people would be down in the isles to make an end of their haymaking. Then Gizur the white and Geir the priest rode east over the rivers as soon as ever they heard that, and so east across the sands to Hof. Then they sent word to Starkad under the Threecorner, and there they all met who were to fall on Gunnar, and took counsel how they might best bring it about.

Mord said that they could not come on Gunnar unawares, unless they seized the farmer who dwelt at the next homestead, whose name was Thorkell, and made him go against his will with them to lay hands on the hound Sam, and unless he went before them to the homestead to do this.

Then they set out east for Lithend, but sent to fetch

Thorkell. They seized him and bound him, and gave him two choices—one that they would slay him, or else he must lay hands on the hound; but he chooses rather to save his life, and went with them.

There was a beaten sunk road, between fences, above the farm yard at Lithend, and there they halted with their band. Master Thorkell went up to the homestead, and the tyke lay on the top of the house, and he entices the dog away with him into a deep hollow in the path. Just then the hound sees that there are men before them, and he leaps on Thorkell and tears his belly open.

Aunund of Witchwood smote the hound on the head with his axe, so that the blade sunk into the brain. The hound gave such a great howl that they thought it passing strange, and he fell down dead.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

GUNNAR'S SLAYING.

GUNNAR woke up in his hall and said—

"Thou hast been sorely treated, Sam, my fosterling, and this warning is so meant that our two deaths will not be far apart."

Gunnar's hall was made all of wood, and roofed with beams above, and there were window-slits under the beams that carried the roof, and they were fitted with shutters.

Gunnar slept in a loft above the hall, and so did Hallgerda and his mother.

Now when they were come near to the house they knew not whether Gunnar were at home, and bade that some one would go straight up to the house and see if he could find out. But the rest sat them down on the ground.

Thorgrim the Easterling went and began to climb up on the hall; Gunnar sees that a red kirtle passed before the windowslit, and thrusts out the bill, and smote him on the middle. Thorgrim's feet slipped from under him, and he dropped his shield, and down he toppled from the roof.

Then he goes to Gizur and his band as they sat on the ground.

Gizur looked at him and said—

"Well, is Gunnar at home?"

"Find that out for yourselves," said Thorgrim; "but this I am sure of, that his bill is at home," and with that he fell down dead.

Then they made for the buildings. Gunnar shot out

arrows at them, and made a stout defence, and they could get nothing done. Then some of them got into the out houses and tried to attack him thence, but Gunnar found them out with his arrows there also, and still they could get nothing done.

So it went on for a while, then they took a rest, and made a second onslaught. Gunnar still shot out at them, and they could do nothing, and fell off the second time. Then Gizur the white said—

"Let us press on harder; nothing comes of our onslaught."

Then they made a third bout of it, and were long at it, and then they fell off again.

Gunnar said, "There lies an arrow outside on the wall, and it is one of their shafts; I will shoot at them with it, and it will be a shame to them if they get a hurt from their own weapons."

His mother said, "Do not so, my son; nor rouse them again when they have already fallen off from the attack."

But Gunnar caught up the arrow and shot it after them, and struck Eylif Aunund's son, and he got a great wound; he was standing all by himself, and they knew not that he was wounded.

"Out came an arm yonder," says Gizur, "and there

was a gold ring on it, and took an arrow from the roof, and they would not look outside for shafts if there were enough in doors; and now ye shall make a fresh onslaught.

"Let us burn him house and all," said Mord.

"That shall never be," says Gizur, "though I knew that my life lay on it; but it is easy for thee to find out some plan, such a cunning man as thou art said to be."

Some ropes lay there on the ground, and they were often used to strengthen the roof. Then Mord said—Let us take the ropes and throw one end over the end of the carrying beams, but let us fasten the other end to these rocks and twist them tight with levers, and so pull the roof off the hall."

So they took the ropes and all lent a hand to carry this out, and before Gunnar was aware of it, they had pulled the whole roof off the hall.

Then Gunnar still shoots with his bow so that they could never come nigh him. Then Mord said again that they must burn the house over Gunnar's head. But Gizur said—

"I know not why thou wilt speak of that which no one else wishes, and that shall never be."

Just then Thorbrand Thorleik's son, sprang up on the roof, and cuts asunder Gunnar's bowstring. Gunnar

clutches the bill with both hands, and turns on him quickly and drives it through him, and hurls him down on the ground.

Then up sprung Asbrand his brother. Gunnar thrusts at him with the bill, and he threw his shield before the blow, but the bill passed clean through the shield and broke both his arms, and down he fell from the wall.

Gunnar had already wounded eight men and slain those twain.* By that time Gunnar had got two wounds, and all men said that he never once winced either at wounds or death.

Then Gunnar said to Hallgerda, "Give me two locks of thy hair, and ye two, my mother and thou, twist them together into a bowstring for me."

"Does aught lie on it?" she says.

"My life lies on it," he said; "for they will never come to close quarters with me if I can keep them off with my bow."

"Well!" she says, "Now I will call to thy mind that slap on the face which thou gavest me; and I care never a whit whether thou holdest out a long while or a short."

Then Gunnar sang a song—

* Thorgrim Easterling and Thorbrand.

"Each who hurls the gory javelin
Hath some honour of his own,
Now my helpmeet wimple-hooded
Hurries all my fame to earth.
No one owner of a war-ship
Often asks for little things,
Woman, fond of Frodi's flour,*
Wends her hand as she is wont."

"Every one has something to boast of," says Gunnar, "and I will ask thee no more for this."

"Thou behavest ill," said Rannveig, "and this shame shall long be had in mind."

Gunnar made a stout and bold defence, and now wounds other eight men with such sore wounds that many lay at death's door. Gunnar keeps them all off until he fell worn out with toil. Then they wounded him with many and great wounds, but still he got away out of their hands, and held his own against them a while longer, but at last it came about that they slew him.

Of this defence of his, Thorkell the Skald of Gota-Elf sang in the verses which follow,—

"We have heard how south in Iceland
Gunnar guarded well himself,
Boldly battle's thunder wielding,
Fiercest foeman on the wave;
Hero of the golden collar,
Sixteen with the sword he wounded;

* Frodi's flour, a periphrasis for "gold."

In the shock that Odin loveth,
Two before him tasted death."

But this is what Thormod Olaf's son sang,—

"None that scattered sea's bright sunbeams,*
Won more glorious fame than Gunnar,
So runs fame of old in Iceland,
Fitting fame of heathen men;
Lord of fight when helms were crashing,
Lives of foeman twain he took,
Wielding bitter steel he sorely
Wounded twelve, and four besides."

Then Gizur spoke and said, "We have now laid low to earth a mighty chief, and hard work has it been, and the fame of this defence of his shall last as long as men live in this land."

After that he went to see Rannveig and said, "Wilt thou grant us earth here for two of our men who are dead, that they may lie in a cairn here?"

"All the more willingly for two," she says, "because I wish with all my heart I had to grant it to all of you."

"It must be forgiven thee," he says, to speak thus, "for thou hast had a great loss."

Then he gave orders that no man should spoil or rob anything there.

* "Sea's bright sunbeams," a periphrasis for "gold."

After that they went away.

Then Thorgeir Starkad's son said, "We may not be in our house at home for the sons of Sigfus, unless thou Gizur or thou Geir be here south some little while."

"This shall be so," says Gizur, and they cast lots, and the lot fell on Geir to stay behind.

After that he came to the Point, and set up his house there; he had a son whose name was Hroald; he was base born, and his mother's name was Biartey;* he boasted that he had given Gunnar his death blow. Hroald was at the Point with his father.

Thorgeir Starkad's son boasted of another wound which he had given to Gunnar.

Gizur sat at home at Mossfell. Gunnar's slaying was heard of, and ill spoken of throughout the whole country, and his death was a great grief to many a man.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

GUNNAR SINGS A SONG DEAD.

NJAL could ill brook Gunnar's death, nor could the sons of Sigfus brook it either.

They asked whether Njal thought they had any right

* She was a sister of Thorwald the scurvy, who was slain at Horsebeck in Grimsness.

to give notice of a suit of manslaughter for Gunnar, or to set the suit on foot.

He said that could not be done, as the man had been outlawed; but said it would be better worth trying to do something to wound their glory, by slaying some men in vengeance after him.

They cast a cairn over Gunnar, and made him sit upright in the cairn. Rannveig would not hear of his bill being buried in the cairn, but said he alone should have it as his own, who was ready to avenge Gunnar. So no one took the bill.

She was so hard on Hallgerda, that she was on the point of killing her; and she said that she had been the cause of her son's slaying.

Then Hallgerda fled away to Gritwater, and her son Grani with her, and they shared the goods between them; Hogni was to have the land at Lithend and the homestead on it, but Grani was to have the land let out on lease.

Now this token happened at Lithend, that the neat-herd and the serving-maid were driving cattle by Gunnar's cairn. They thought that he was merry, and that he was singing inside the cairn. They went home and told Rannveig, Gunnar's mother, of this token, but she bade them go and tell Njal.

Then they went over to Bergthorsknoll and told Njal, but he made them tell it three times over.

After that, he had a long talk all alone with Skarphedinn; and Skarphedinn took his weapons and goes with them to Lithend.

Rannveig and Hogni gave him a hearty welcome, and were very glad to see him. Rannveig asked him to stay there some time, and he said he would.

He and Hogni were always together, at home and abroad. Hogni was a brisk, brave man, well-bred and well-trained in mind and body, but distrustful and slow to believe what he was told, and that was why they dared not tell him of the token.

Now those two, Skarphedinn and Hogni, were out of doors one evening by Gunnar's cairn on the south side. The moon and stars were shining clear and bright, but every now and then the clouds drove over them. Then all at once they thought they saw the cairn standing open, and lo! Gunnar had turned himself in the cairn and looked at the moon. They thought they saw four lights burning in the cairn, and none of them threw a shadow. They saw that Gunnar was merry, and he wore a joyful face. He sang a song, and so loud, that it might have been heard though they had been further off.

" He that lavished rings in largesse,
When the fights' red rain-drops fell,
Bright of face, with heart-strings hardy,
Hogni's father met his fate;
Then his brow with helmet shrouding,
Bearing battle-shield, he spake,
'I will die the prop of battle,
Sooner die than yield an inch,
Yes, sooner die than yield an inch.'"

After that the cairn was shut up again.

"Wouldst thou believe these tokens if Njal or I told them to thee?" says Skarphedinn.

"I would believe them," he says, "if Njal told them, for it is said he never lies."

"Such tokens as these mean much," says Skarphedinn, "when he shows himself to us, he who would sooner die than yield to his foes; and see how he has taught us what we ought to do."

"I shall be able to bring nothing to pass," says Hogni, "unless thou wilt stand by me."

"Now," says Skarphedinn, "will I bear in mind how Gunnar behaved after the slaying of your kinsman Sigmund; now I will yield you such help as I may. My father gave his word to Gunnar to do that whenever thou or thy mother had need of it."

After that they go home to Lithend.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

GUNNAR OF LITHEND AVENGED.

Now we shall set off at once," says Skarphedinn, "this very night; for if they learn that I am here, they will be more wary of themselves."

"I will fulfil thy counsel," says Hogni.

After that they took their weapons when all men were in their beds. Hogni takes down the bill, and it gave a sharp ringing sound.

Rannveig sprang up in great wrath and said,—

"Who touches the bill, when I forbade every one to lay hand on it?"

"I mean," says Hogni, "to bring it to my father, that he may bear it with him to Valhalla, and have it with him when the warriors meet."

"Rather shalt thou now bear it," she answered, "and avenge thy father; for the bill has spoken of one man's death or more."

Then Hogni went out, and told Skarphedinn all the words that his grandmother had spoken.

After that they fare to the Point, and two ravens flew along with them all the way. They came to the Point

while it was still night. Then they drove the flock before them up to the house, and then Hroald and Tjorfi ran out and drove the flock up the hollow path, and had their weapons with them.

Skarphedinn sprang up and said, "Thou needest not to stand and think if it be really as it seems. Men are here."

Then Skarphedinn smites Tjorfi his deathblow. Hroald had a spear in his hand, and Hogni rushes at him; Hroald thrusts at him, but Hogni hewed asunder the spear-shaft with his bill, and drives the bill through him.

After that they left them there dead, and turn away thence under the Threecorner.

Skarphedinn jumps up on the house and plucks the grass, and those who were inside the house thought it was cattle that had come on the roof. Starkad and Thorgeir took their weapons and upper clothing, and went out and round about the fence of the yard. But when Starkad sees Skarphedinn he was afraid, and wanted to turn back.

Skarphedinn cut him down by the fence. Then Hogni comes against Thorgeir and slays him with the bill.

Thence they went to Hof, and Mord was outside in the field, and begged for mercy, and offered them full atonement.

Skarphedinn told Mord the slaying of those four men, and sang a song.

"Four who wielded warlike weapons
We have slain, all men of worth,
Them at once, gold-greedy fellow,
Thou shalt follow on the spot;
Let us press this pinch-purse so,
Pouring fear into his heart;
Wretch! reach out to Gunnar's son
Right to settle all disputes."

"And the like journey," says Skarphedinn, "shalt thou also fare, or hand over to Hogni the right to make his own award, if he will take these terms."

Hogni said his mind had been made up not to come to any terms with the slayers of his father; but still at last he took the right to make his own award from Mord.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

HOGNI TAKES AN ATONEMENT FOR GUNNAR'S DEATH.

NJAL took a share in bringing those who had the blood-feud after Starkad and Thorgeir to take an atonement, and a district meeting was called together, and men were chosen to make the award, and every matter was taken into account, even the attack on Gunnar, though

he was an outlaw; but such a fine as was awarded, all that Mord paid; for they did not close their award against him before the other matter was already settled, and then they set off one award against the other.

Then they were all set at one again, but at the Thing there was great talk, and the end of it was, that Geir the priest and Hogni were set at one again, and that atonement they held to ever afterwards.

Geir the priest dwelt in the Lithe till his deathday, and he is out of the story.

Njal asked ás a wife for Hogni Alfeida the daughter of Weatherlid the Skald, and she was given away to him. Their son was Ari, who sailed for Shetland, and took him a wife there; from him is come Einar the Shetlander, one of the briskest and boldest of men.

Hogni kept up his friendship with Njal, and he is now out of the story.

CHAPTER LXXX.

OF KOLSKEGG: HOW HE WAS BAPTIZED.

Now it is to be told of Kolskegg how he comes to Norway, and is in the Bay east that winter. But the summer after he fares east to Denmark, and bound him-

self to Sweyn Forkbeard the Dane-king, and there he had great honour.

One night he dreamt that a man came to him; he was bright and glistening, and he thought he woke him up. He spoke, and said to him—

"Stand up and come with me."

"What wilt thou with me?" he asks.

"I will get thee a bride, and thou shalt be my knight."

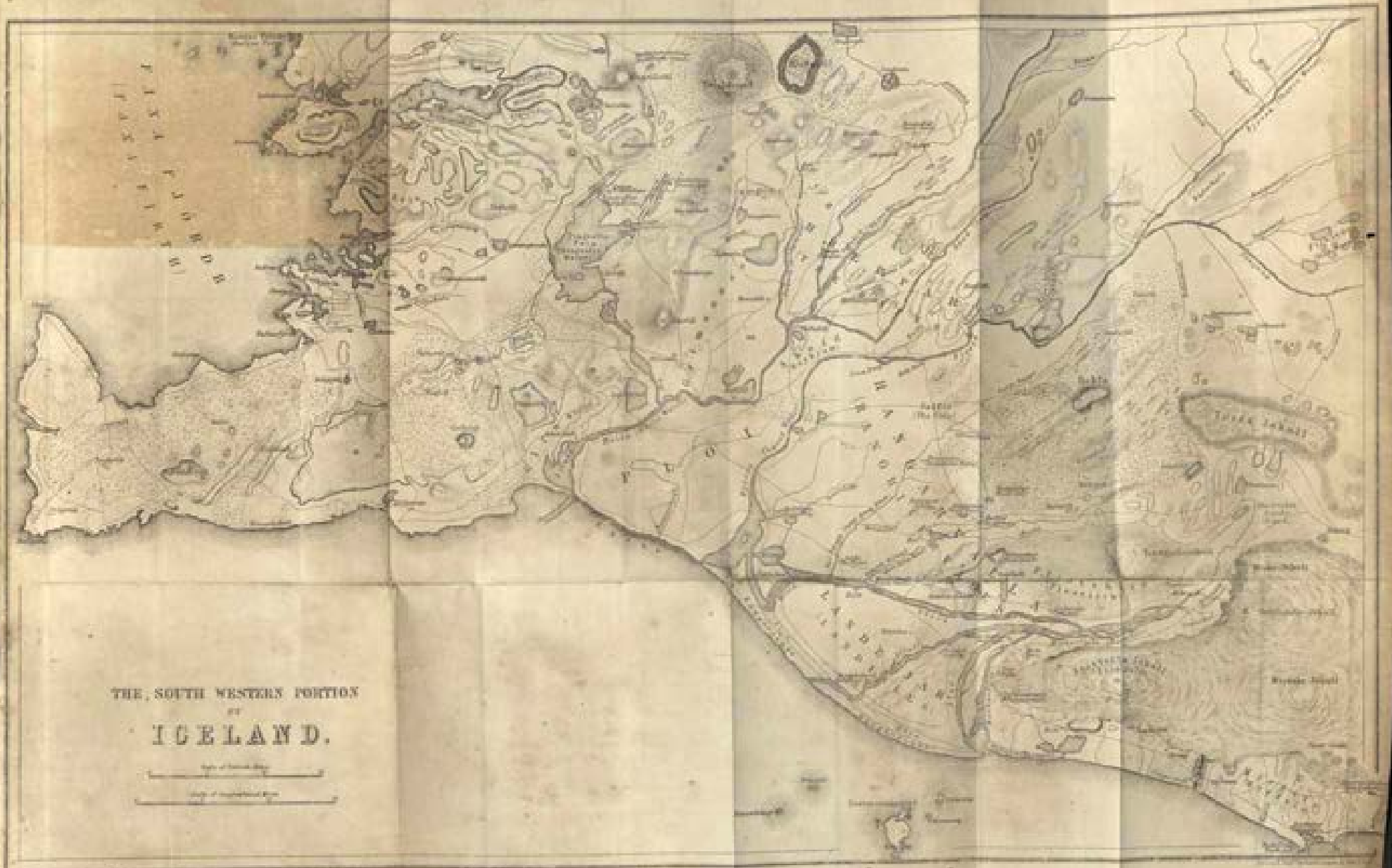
He thought he said yea to that, and after that he woke up.

Then he went to a wizard and told him the dream, but he read it so that he should fare to southern lands and become God's knight.

Kolskegg was baptized in Denmark, but still he could not rest there, but fared east to Russia, and was there one winter. Then he fared thence out to Micklegarth,* and there took service with the Emperor. The last that was heard of him was, that he wedded a wife there, and was captain over the Varangians, and stayed there till his death-day; and he, too, is out of this story.

* Constantinople.

END OF VOL. I.



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